

Zagreb Charter

on Lifelong Entrepreneurial Learning: A Keystone for
Competitiveness, Smart and Inclusive Growth and
Jobs in the SEECP Participants

Zagreb, 2 December 2016

Preamble

We, the representatives of relevant ministries responsible for entrepreneurship and/or education of the SEECP Participants Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Turkey and Kosovo*¹, have met in Zagreb on 2 December 2016 to discuss further actions and possibilities within the scope of our responsibilities, aimed at improving and promoting the objectives of regional cooperation within South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), such as strengthening the security and political cooperation, intensification of economic relations and cooperation in the field of human dimension, democracy, justice and the fight against organized crime. By strengthening good neighbourly relations and transformation of the region into an area of peace and stability, SEECP significantly contributes to moving towards to EU and NATO membership of the aspirant SEECP Participants.

We commit to support structured regional cooperation in the area of entrepreneurial learning based on the Charter on Good Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in South Eastern Europe and in accordance with relevant EU documents; Europe 2020 Strategy, Investment Plan for EU (Juncker Plan), Small Business Act for Europe, Entrepreneurship Action Plan 2020, Rethinking Education 2020, New Skills Agenda, European Parliament resolution on Promoting Youth Entrepreneurship through Education and Training, Entrepreneurship Competence Framework, as well as UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

One of the key documents for fostering regional cooperation in the area of entrepreneurial learning is also the Charter for Entrepreneurial Learning: The Keystone for Growth and Jobs, (hereafter: the 2012 Charter) signed in Zagreb, Croatia in 2012.

The 2012 Charter concluded, in line with EU-level and global policies and trends, that entrepreneurial learning is crucial for personal, social and economic development in all our economies. Equipping citizens with the entrepreneurial key competence, such as the knowledge, skills and attitudes for turning ideas into action, both through formal and non-formal education in a lifelong learning perspective, plays the key role in both forming new entrepreneurs and in increasing the employability of those who choose other career paths. Training for small and medium enterprises represents another crucial form of entrepreneurial learning that upgrades the skills of potential entrepreneurs, making them more productive and competitive. Human capital is one of the most important resources for long-term stability, inclusive growth and SME development. Therefore, the systematic approach to tailor-made training, advising, mentoring, coaching of SMEs through all phases of their development, from start up to development and growth, is of the utmost importance.

The 2012 Charter recognised that challenges for small businesses are substantive significant in our region and that regional cooperation is one of the best modalities to jointly work on systematic approach to human capital development and life-long

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with the UN Security Council Resolution 1244 and the Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

entrepreneurial learning in order to help our economies and SMEs to grow and to become more competitive.

The South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning (SEECEL), established in 2009, was identified as a central platform for the implementation of the 2012 Charter's action areas for structured regional cooperation on entrepreneurial learning. Since its establishment, SEECEL has been paying specific attention to how our education and training systems work towards developing an entrepreneurial culture and competences in each of our SEECP Participants. SEECEL facilitated policy processes, educational piloting and peer-learning throughout the region, and has achieved a significant impact and is today recognised as the best practice example of a structured regional cooperation in the area of the entrepreneurial learning and human capital and private sector development.

Objective of the Charter

Today, through this new Charter we outline a number of principles and action lines to bring forward the entrepreneurial learning agenda of our ministries.

We confirm our commitment to systematic development and progress in lifelong entrepreneurial learning through political cooperation and good practice sharing with a view of continued policy learning and improvement.

Principles of the Charter

This Charter is based on the following principles:

Lifelong entrepreneurial learning: entrepreneurial learning should begin in early education (primary education or even pre-school) and be sequenced through subsequent levels (secondary to higher education). In this way, entrepreneurial mind-sets and skills are strengthened in society as a whole. The efforts of the formal education system, therefore, should be reinforced with the promotion of entrepreneurial learning through collaboration with civic interest groups, businesses and business support organisations;

Entrepreneurship key competence: the promotion of entrepreneurship as a key competence (as one of the eight key competences for lifelong learning defined by the European Parliament) is critical to the development of the entrepreneurial mind-set and behaviour, resulting not only in increasing numbers of small businesses but also greater creativity and productivity of the workforce in general;

EU and global policy framework: entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial learning are an increasingly high priority in EU policy in the context of competitiveness and job-creation, which is highly relevant to our economies and our common objective for the EU accession;

Entrepreneurial learning also features prominently in the *South East Europe 2020 Strategy*, the EU strategies for the Danube and Adriatic/Ionian regions, and beyond.

Developing entrepreneurial skills has also been highlighted within the UN's *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2016);

Partnership: the entrepreneurial learning agenda requires partnership and cooperation at the local, national and international levels, involving different parts of the learning system and the range of stakeholders with interests in entrepreneurial learning. Cooperation between all levels of education and business is the central pillar of this partnership drive;

Co-working developments: given the novelty and complexity of the entrepreneurial learning policy area, co-working of developments, peer learning and sharing of good practice brings added value and efficiency to efforts at the national and regional levels;

Entrepreneurial learning and social and environmental concerns: through entrepreneurial learning we have the responsibility to promote awareness and the understanding of social and environmental responsibility of individuals, the public sector, communities and businesses serving our communities.

Areas for action

By endorsing this Charter, we commit ourselves to bringing forward developments in the following areas, in each of our respective SEECP Participants, while ensuring added value through our co-working arrangements:

1. Entrepreneurship promotion across all levels and forms of learning systems

We recognise the value and importance of all forms of entrepreneurial learning promoted by schools, universities, training organisations, business support organisations and civic interest groups. We will work on up-scaling existing efforts to incorporate entrepreneurial learning into our national education systems, including through changes to curricula and through support for training of teachers and school management. A particular feature of this work will be to take into account the publication of the European Commission's *Entrepreneurship Competence Framework* (2016), linking it to existing efforts in the region for integrating entrepreneurship into national curricula. We will also work towards achieving the goal of the Riga Conclusions (2015) related to strengthening the entrepreneurship key competence in vocational education and training, especially in the work-based learning and apprenticeship training, and we commit to sharing our progress with non-candidate SEECP Participants that can benefit from our experiences. Additionally, given increasing policy concerns for a safer, cleaner and more sustainable economy, we will consider issues and options as to how the education and training system can better promote an environmental key competence. Special attention will be given to youth and women entrepreneurs.

2. Entrepreneurship in higher education: from human capital development to innovation

Despite the progress achieved in entrepreneurial learning in pre-tertiary education, there is still insufficient support for this policy priority among the higher education community. We will work on encouraging the higher education and research communities to strategically cooperate with government and the private sector to

maximise the entrepreneurial potential of our universities and research environments for purpose of transforming knowledge and ideas into innovations for our societies and economies. We will also work on ensuring that higher education equips graduates with entrepreneurial competences that will be crucial in terms of potential entrepreneurship activities and their overall employability. We recognize the importance of the European Commission's initiative HEInnovate and will support the promotion and the application of this tool in our higher education system in order to encourage their entrepreneurial dimension.

3. Upgrading SME skills through business support organisations

We recognise that training for SMEs is a crucial factor in building sustainable businesses, equally for start-ups and growing enterprises, for increasing productivity or exports. We will therefore encourage business support organisations, especially chambers, as a main representative/voice of the business world, to take the leading role in the SME skills policy agenda, in particular for developing data and wider intelligence on SME skills developments and to target specialised training on growth-oriented businesses (scale-ups) and for high-potential start-ups.

4. Horizontal policy coordination, partnership and regional cooperation

We recognise that the entrepreneurial learning agenda addresses a host of policy areas (education, training, employment, social inclusion, small business, innovation, digital competence) which requires us to cooperate and coordinate strategically both at home, between SEECP Participants with European partners and beyond. For the purposes of enhanced partnership and development of the entrepreneurial learning agenda between our ministries, we will continue to strategically cooperate and support the mandate and activities of SEECCEL and to foster digital competence to contribute to EU digital agenda and digital markets.

5. Reinforcing networks, sharing of good practice and peer learning

We appreciate the work to date of the regional networks facilitated by SEECCEL on human capital developments in the South-East Europe. We will further develop the networks to address specific areas of policy interest as expressed by the SEECP Participants collectively, identify and disseminate good practice from the SEECP and the European Union and build knowledge and know-how through peer learning activities.

6. Reinforcing the contribution of SEECCEL to the SBA support framework

Based on the positive results achieved in the implementation of the SBA 2016 assessment exercise, and with an objective of further ensuring national and regional ownership of the SBA policy process, we endorse further involvement of SEECCEL as one of the five official partner institutions of the SBA assessment process in the Western Balkans and Turkey, alongside the European Commission, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the European Training Foundation, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Also, based on conclusions and recommendations of the report on the EU countries policies and practices in the area of entrepreneurial learning prepared together with the Croatian SME Envoy to the EU SME Envoy Network and presented at the SME Envoy Network meeting during the Assembly in 2015, it is crucial to:

- further strengthen the “key competence approach” to entrepreneurship education in national and school-level curricula in EU Member States
- to move beyond curriculum specification to an “ecosystem approach” that supports schools and teachers to develop entrepreneurship education and that fosters stakeholder involvement
- ensure that entrepreneurship education ecosystems at the national level have full support of education ministries
- consider how to improve the Open Method of Coordination on entrepreneurship education between Member States through the platform of the SME Envoy Network
- consider how to strengthen EU-level expert support for entrepreneurship education

7. Readiness for further collaboration at the macro-regional and global level

We offer to share our knowledge, expertise and experience developed within SEECP and to further enrich our work by engaging with policy experts and practitioner networks from the European Union, its neighbourhood and beyond.

Conclusion

Our market transition has required us to make considerable adjustments to our education and training systems to ensure improved relevance and contribution of our human capital to the competitiveness of small businesses and the overall economy. More recently, we have had to additionally respond to the turbulence of global financial markets, which has created uncertainty for our businesses and workforces. Necessity for creation of new jobs and management of the existing ones is a common challenge for all economies.

Set against these challenges, and with a steadfast commitment to our integration within the European Union, we confirm our readiness to design and implement necessary policies, structures and capacities to foster the development of an entrepreneurial society and entrepreneurial behaviour in everyday life.

Assuming further commitment by SEECEL’s funders to support its activities in the future, we support the role of SEECEL as a central regional platform for coordinating joint work on these action lines, in cooperation with other national, regional and international partners, with the goal to maximise the value of investment.

Finally, we invite those countries of the European Union and neighbouring regions that share our commitment to building a more entrepreneurial world, to join us on this journey. We owe it to the next generation, and beyond.