



IGNITE EUROPE DEVELOPS KEY COMPETENCES AND SKILLS

The European Commission has developed a European Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning as part of its Training 2010 Work Programme. The rationale behind this framework is to ensure equity of skills development across the European member states, in order to benefit all citizens and enable them to participate fully in the constantly changing world of work.

In particular, the framework encourages development of key competencies among the hardest-to-reach groups such as people with low basic skills, the long-term unemployed, older people, migrants and people with disabilities – all groups targeted by the Ignite Europe project.

Competences - as defined by the European Union - are 'a combination of skills, knowledge and attitudes appropriate to the context' which all individuals need for both personal development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment. The framework sets out eight equally important – and interlinked – key competences including communication in both mother tongue and a foreign language, basic numeracy and literacy standards and the ability to use modern technology, as well as broad citizenship awareness and abilities.

Underpinning the eight key competences are the cross-cutting abilities of critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem-solving, risk assessment, decision-taking and constructive management of feelings.



IGNITE EUROPE HITS KEY COMPETENCES

Although the Ignite Europe project will touch on a number of key competences its particular focus will be on addressing these two key competences:

- Social and civic competence.
- Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship.

The partners will be mapping the key skills, knowledge and attitude of the two key competences against the elements within the current Ignite programme, and use this as the basis for further development of new modules by partners.



NEW MODULE DEVELOPMENT

Over the past three months the Ignite Europe partners have been reviewing the original Ignite programme, both in terms of its relationship to certain target groups, and also how it meets the two key competencies above. In conclusion, the partners have agreed to develop the following, new modules. We envisage that these modules will make Ignite Europe more flexible and more relevant, not only to citizens of EC member states, but also certain disadvantaged groups.

Lead partner SSDT from Merseyside is pulling together an updated personal development section, which will create new modules in:

- Individual Learning Plan, including pre- during and post-completion self-assessment of the journey travelled
- Risk-taking awareness
- Transferrable personal resilience skills
- Motivational skills

A new community context section is being added by our Swedish partner, Emmerce, which will include modules covering:

- What is a social enterprise?
- What is a social entrepreneur?
- Collaborative thinking
- Values development
- Entrepreneurial competences
- Social enterprise in a digital era

Under the business planning section, Kolping in Germany are going to look at developing a range of creative tools to help identify and then define an idea, and introducing the vital element of sustainability by providing methods of critical thinking to evaluate the idea.

Synthesis in Cyprus, as well as contributing a module on risk awareness, are also going to look at providing a practical guide to funding in each country and also at European Union level, as this is one of the key issues for new social businesses that the research has highlighted.

Euro-Training in Bulgaria will be updating the market research module, highlighting examples of success stories from each of our target groups (see separate article) and highlighting different techniques and strategies relevant to different groups, while SIF in Lithuania will be exploring how we can use different types of mentoring to support new social entrepreneurs post start-up – including social mentoring and e-mentoring.

Drawing on the research we've conducted into the various target groups, SSDT will be identifying how we place Ignite fully in the European context, developing EC citizenship through information sheets on EU legislation, the context of the single market, and including information on social entrepreneurship and governance issues in each of the partner countries.





DIFFERENT ENTREPRENEURS – DIFFERENT NEEDS

As part of this project, Ignite Europe undertook to research different groups of citizens, to identify any particular barriers they faced on their route to setting up a business, and any particular needs that they had that mainstream provision wasn't providing.

The outcome of this research would, we envisaged, help shape the Ignite Europe project to address the particular needs of groups often left marginalised in society and business. Desk research was undertaken by the partners into the following groups:

- Black and other Ethnic Minorities (BME) (SSDT, UK)
- Long-term unemployed people with clinically diagnosed long-term psychiatric problems (Euro-Training, Bulgaria)
- Young people aged 18-25 (Synthesis, Cyprus)
- Migrants (Kolping, Germany)
- Women (Social Innovation Fund, Lithuania)
- Those who are unemployed or at risk of unemployment (Emmerce, Sweden)

As you might expect, there were different barriers experienced in different countries, because of their attitude to entrepreneurship, social or commercial.

For example, in Bulgaria, social enterprises appear in many cases to be entities that are still state-sponsored rather than commercially independent, often following old-style management processes that don't reward innovation or market

competitiveness. In Cyprus a surprising finding was that entrepreneurs are not well-thought-of in society – Cypriot people feeling that 'entrepreneurs tend to exploit other people's work or only care about their own wallet'.

The UK on the other hand is still seen as a 'nation of shopkeepers' where the private sector is more highly thought of than the public or third sectors, although it does have a thriving social enterprise sector that is defined, growing and becoming more influential.

However, when it came to looking at the specific target groups, there were more similarities than might first be thought.

- The need for financial assistance for new start-ups is key and access to finance was a huge barrier across virtually every group.
- The need for mentors to be drawn from a similar background and having made a similar journey – peer mentors – was mentioned several times.
- Many of the target groups faced discrimination or attitudes in society that hindered their entrepreneurialism.
- Lack of specialist business advice or know-how.
- Lack of peer role models or networks

This research will give us a deeper understanding of how the programme might be amended to reflect the real experience of various groups of would-be social entrepreneurs, and also how to make it more relevant to their needs and aspirations. To read the full report, please visit the website.



IGNITE EUROPE PARTNERS MEET IN LITHUANIA

The second meeting of the Ignite Europe partnership was held in Lithuania's beautiful second city Kaunas in May.

Expertly hosted by the Social Innovation Fund, the six partners focused on two main areas - defining 'social entrepreneurship' in a way that was meaningful for all partner countries, and reviewing the preliminary research around the target groups which led on to a discussion around which modules needed refining and where there was a gap needing new module development. This latter discussion referred to the key competences being addressed by Ignite Europe and the need for the modules to progress these.

The meeting also received a presentation on the CMS system from Swedish partner Emmerce, and there were discussions on the launch of the public website. The next meeting, in Sweden in December 2012, will focus on the development of the new modules.



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

The original Ignite programme was developed in the UK by South Sefton Development Trust and took the generally accepted definition of social enterprise to be 'a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for those purposes'. Effectively, social enterprise lies between the public and private sectors and in the UK is often defined as the 'third sector'.

Within other partner countries, particularly the former Soviet bloc countries, social enterprise had a different interpretation, more closely aligned with the previous economic system, while in other countries social enterprise was an emerging concept that was still evolving.

The six partners revisited the definition, and took into account the European Commission definitions, starting with the definition of entrepreneurship as 'an individual's creative capacity, independently or within an organisation, to identify an opportunity and to pursue it in order to produce new value or economic success'.

Accepting that the primary driver of entrepreneurship is about creating economic growth, then it followed that there needed to be an element of trading and profit creation in any definition for Ignite Europe. This would mean excluding the public or state sector provision and the traditional charitable or NGO sector from being 'entrepreneurial'. These sectors, however, provide the 'social' model, their focus being on delivering wide public benefit.



All six European project partners exist within mixed economies, where private business co-exists with state or public provision and a 'third sector' with varying degrees of commercial dominance and state intervention. In all of these six countries, however, social enterprises – no matter what legal structures they have, or how they are named – share the same characteristics:

- They are businesses which trade to make a surplus/profit.
- They have a primary function of operating for social good or community wellbeing, through their integration of excluded groups into society and working life, or through provision of services to meet a social need that are not provided by state or the market.
- They reinvest their surpluses in their own business for social good rather than private profit.

The European Commission, in its Social Business Initiative communication, identifies that social enterprises- and social entrepreneurs - can provide innovative solutions to the current economic, social and environmental challenges facing member states by developing sustainable, largely non-exportable jobs, social inclusion, improvement of local social services, territorial cohesion etc. Ignite Europe's definition echoes that used by the Commission.

At its second meeting in May 2012, Ignite Europe agreed the following definition of social enterprise for the purposes of the project:

A social entrepreneur uses business methods primarily to achieve social benefit, with the method of organisation or ownership reflecting the mission, and trading surpluses reinvested to achieve the social objectives.

Where social benefit is defined thus:

Providing goods or services to socially vulnerable or marginalised groups of people, or creating employment opportunities for disadvantaged people in providing goods or services, even if those goods or services are not of social benefit in themselves.

