

Green Entrepreneurship Training (GET-UP) Project

I06 – Policy Paper

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1. Executive Summary

Environmental concerns, as well as consumers' awareness of buying green or environmentally-friendly products, has a positive impact on the emergence of the green market. The emerging green market brings many opportunities in different fields. The emergence of the green market has created a competitive advantage between responsible and non-responsible companies.

In fact, entrepreneurs introduce green products and technologies to the market and provide the ground for green entrepreneurship through the transformation of patterns and prototypes to tangible commercial products, and eventually green products and technologies are introduced to the market by green entrepreneurs. The existing structures in many modern societies are unstable, and achieving sustainable development requires a new way of thinking to change these structures, such as political, economic, social, and cultural systems.

Many researchers agree on green entrepreneurship as the driving force behind the emergence of a new economic growth with the advent of the green market.

The GET-UP project has focused on supporting individuals and entrepreneurs in the field of green entrepreneurship or the green economy.

This Policy Paper provides a short overview of GET-UP project, its importance in an EU policy context and the outcomes achieved between September 2016 and December 2018. This paper emphasises the GET-UP approach which could be considered a positive model for developing the understanding and skills required to start and develop a green business. Finally, it puts forward reasons why the GET-UP approach should be considered by policy and decision makers responding to the contemporary need to support the green growth and to catalyse investment and innovation which will underpin sustained growth and give rise to new economic opportunities. All the activities/ projects count a lot in greening the economy and achieving sustainable development, but they will remain scarce until governments are willing to enforce Green Economy and Green Entrepreneurship and take concerted actions to that direction.

2. A Short Overview of GET-UP Project

2.1. What is GET-UP Project

The GET-UP (**G**reen **E**ntrepreneurship **T**raining - **U**nderpinning **P**rosperity) project is funded by the EU through the Erasmus+ Programme, Key action 2 (Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices): Strategic Partnerships for vocational education and training.

The GET-UP consortium comprises eight partners from seven Member States, namely: Universitaet Paderborn, UPB (Germany), Universitatea din Pitesti, UPIT (Romania), Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative Limited, SFEDI (United Kingdom), Meath Community Rural And Social Development Partnership Limited, MEATH PARTNERSHIP (Ireland), European University Cyprus, EUC (Cyprus), Future in Perspective Limited, FIPL (Ireland), Fundacion Universidad Empresa De La Region De Murcia, FUERM (Spain), Innoventum Oy, INNOV (Finland).

The GET-UP project has focused on supporting individuals and entrepreneurs in the field of green entrepreneurship or the green economy. Through the new tailored training curriculum promoting green entrepreneurship, a bespoke train-the-trainer course and an on-line observatory showcasing green businesses in Europe, providing access to a range of best practice entrepreneurship tools and resources and providing an on-line forum for ideas and practices exchange, GET-UP is providing support to potential green entrepreneurs who are interested in developing new green businesses, to existing micro-enterprise owners who wish to pursue a greener business or product model and are interested in workforce up-skilling and to VET professionals who are interested in supporting learning in this new growth sector.

GET-UP project engaged with these three target groups from September 2016, to December 2018.

2.2. Why is GET-UP Project Important

There is little doubt that the development of the green economy can make a significant contribution to restoring Europe's economy to growth by harnessing new business and employment opportunities that green businesses offer and many countries are looking to green growth as the way out of the current economic crisis. "We need green growth because risks to development are rising as growth continues to erode natural capital. If left unchecked, this would mean

increased water scarcity, worsening resource bottlenecks, greater pollution, climate change, and unrecoverable biodiversity loss” (OECD, Towards green growth, 2011).

The global market for environmental goods and services is vast and it continues to grow quickly. UN research indicates that green investment programmes create more jobs per Euro or Dollar spent than many other stimulus programmes (SEF Alliance, 2009). UNEP (2011) claims that the greening of economies is a net generator of decent jobs – good jobs that offer adequate wages, safe working conditions, job security, reasonable career prospects and worker rights (This is the International Labour Organization’s definition of “decent work.”)

“The Sustainability Imperative” published in the Harvard Business Review 2012, insists that “sustainability and the green economy is the next transformational business mega-trend comparable to mass production, manufacturing quality movement, IT revolution, and globalization”. It further acknowledges that “firms seeking to gain a competitive advantage must know what to do and how to do it” and that “countries must act now to support green initiatives as this unstoppable mega-trend will make or break economies around the world”. Although we are still at a relatively early stage of this new mega-trend, it can be expected to continue to grow exponentially.

Educationalists can either fuel entrepreneurship or stop it in its tracks, however, responding to new mega-trends with fit-for-purpose curriculum resources is just the latest in a long line of challenges that educationalists have faced in recent years. It is this challenge that the GET-UP project consortium is committed to addressing by developing a suite of bespoke curriculum resources to support young green entrepreneurs. There is no green entrepreneurship curriculum at any level available in any of the partner countries and there is significant need for educational and training interventions that make the ground fertile for young green entrepreneurs to thrive, when one considers that tomorrow’s green entrepreneurs will

- create sustainable jobs and wealth for their communities;
- commercialize new green innovations that will make people’s lives better
- contribute to achieving national economic growth in harmony with environmental protection.

A green entrepreneurship curriculum is not just an entrepreneurship curriculum with one or two modules added. Green entrepreneurship revolves around a set of core principles that set it apart from everyday entrepreneurship. Green entrepreneurs propose business models that are not only economically profitable but also create a positive environmental and social impact. Green entrepreneurs are aware of the need to change the way society has understood development and prosperity during the last century. They aim at integrating the environmental,

economic and social axis into the core business of the company and strive to provide eco-innovative solutions to the way goods and services are produced, consumed and offered. Green entrepreneurs provide the breeding ground for starting and sustaining a green economy by providing green products and services; by introducing greener production techniques; by boosting demand for green products and services and by creating green jobs.

While the primary innovation was the bespoke green entrepreneurship curriculum, consortium partners have ensured that best practice in pedagogic instruction and the highest design standards in the production of learning content were achieved. More and more people are waking up to the innumerable benefits of on-line education and training. Flexibility, accessibility and affordability allied to a persistent need for up-skilling are the main reasons that this modern phenomenon will continue to thrive into the future. While the growth in popularity of on-line learning has brought about an increase in the number of on-line learning courses it has not had any noticeable impact on the quality of courseware available. GET-UP has harnessed advances in technology to generate engaging and inspiring learning content. For many educators the growth of on-line learning has created uncertainty and many feel that their professional standing has been undermined. The realisation that the "sage-on-the-stage" model of education and training is no longer the pre-eminent or only source of learning has led many tutors and the establishments they work for to question the veracity and quality of on-line courses. GET-UP has addressed these concerns.

2.3. What Has GET-UP Project Achieved

Since September 2016, the following outputs have been achieved within GET-UP project:

1. **Summary Pedagogic Research Report.** The consortium performed a combined research process: a desk-based exercise acquired through literature review and a field-based exercise acquired through questionnaire, with the purpose of (1) identifying modules to be developed in the Green Entrepreneurship curriculum; (2) highlighting topics to be addressed in the in-service CPD programme for VET professionals; (3) informing the design of the curriculum modules to ensure that high-quality standards are achieved in content production.
2. **CPD (Continuing Professional Development) Training Programme for VET Staff.** A comprehensive in-service CPD training programme was developed to support VET staff. It provides the future trainers and tutors who will be active in the Entrepreneurship courses, which are based on the GET-UP curriculum, with insights in the topic and the relevant aspects. In addition to that it provides them with skills in the field of eLearning and the use of blended-

learning approaches which are a backbone of the GET-UP approach. There is significant demand placed on VET to be more responsive to the needs of industry and for the alignment of VET with local, regional and national development priorities and strategies. Green entrepreneurship is a new field in VET and given the lack of comprehensive entrepreneurship education within existing VET provision it is highly unlikely that many tutors or trainers have the required insight and understanding to successfully deliver the green entrepreneurship curriculum without proper in-service CPD training that addresses two distinct elements: (1) the principles of green entrepreneurship; (2) delivering training in blended learning environments.

3. **Green Entrepreneurship Curriculum.** A bespoke, modular green entrepreneurship curriculum was developed to support the acquisition of skills and knowledge required to start and develop a new green business or green an existing micro/small business. The curriculum is addressed to: individuals looking to start a new green business, existing green entrepreneurs with limited experience of managing a business, existing owner-managers wishing to green their business operations. The curriculum comprises 8 modules: Understanding the Green Economy, Understanding Green Entrepreneurship, Being Creative and Innovative, Personal Enterprising Skills and Behaviours, Identifying and Pitching a New Business Opportunity, Raising Awareness of a Green Business, Managing Money in a Green Business, Managing and Leading Others in a Green Business
4. **On-line Observatory of Green Businesses & E-learning Portal.** (<https://green-entrepreneurship.online/>) An on-line observatory of green businesses as a showcase for green business in each partner country was developed aiming: (1) to present role models for nascent green entrepreneurs and microenterprise owners to inspire them to develop their green idea; (2) to provide instant access to a library of information resources; identified by partners during the research process that might be useful to new or emerging green entrepreneurs; (3) to provide a range of on-line environments and forums where green entrepreneurs and VET professionals can exchange ideas and practices with their peers in partner countries, collaborate on potential joint ventures and support each other. An e-learning portal was developed to be the online channel for the CPD Programme and the Green Entrepreneurship Curriculum. The portal is optimized for mobile access and functions equally well on laptop, tablet or smartphone devices.
5. **Green Entrepreneurship in Europe - A Comparative Perspective.** A series of questionnaires was completed by all partners with different sub-sets of the target group. The first questionnaire was directed to partner organisations themselves to elicit an overview of the green economy in their country, The second questionnaire was addressed to nascent entrepreneurs to elicit their opinions about supports and impediments to developing a green business. The third questionnaire was directed at VET professionals to establish the institutional barriers they face in supporting new development areas like

green entrepreneurship. The fourth and final questionnaire was addressed to micro-enterprise owners to elicit feedback about VET provision in areas such as the green economy and identify essential supports to sustain a healthy green enterprise sector. A comparative analysis of the different country approaches and perspectives was developed and could be used for comparisons and exchanges of best practice, and as a stimulus for policy learning in areas like green entrepreneurship, which is in its infancy in all EU Member States.

6. The present Policy Paper "Green Entrepreneurship Training - Underpinning Prosperity in Europe"

3. Why is GET-UP project a positive model for developing the understanding and skills required to start and develop a green business

It has been emphasized through the whole implementation process of GET-UP project that the green economy should be a priority for governments and that green entrepreneurship education should have a greater emphasis in enterprise and entrepreneurship education. The materials and resources developed within GET-UP project are very important for both the nascent/ existing green entrepreneurs and for the educationalists who can fuel green entrepreneurship. All the stakeholders agreed that the project had an appropriate approach mainly because of the depth and breadth of the training curriculum and that it was targeted in the main at the Green Sector. A policy paper questionnaire was developed and each partner got responses from the stakeholders. 29% of the responses were given by VET providers, 29% by Micro-enterprise owners, 18% potential green entrepreneurs, 18% policy makers and 7% others. The respondents considered that GET-UP has been an appropriate approach because:

- “Business owners constantly need to learn and stay in touch with the latest trends and developments in order to keep their business relevant and profitable.”
- “There is a need for projects that look specifically at the needs of thematic business sectors – a one size fits all approach to entrepreneurship is not helpful when it comes to the green economy”
- “GET-UP raises awareness about green entrepreneurship and its unique needs among trainers and educators – and supports them to provide more personalised training experiences for green entrepreneurs starting out.”
- “GET-UP provides new entrepreneurs and existing businesses with the opportunity to gain a holistic understanding of what it means to be a green entrepreneur and it also provides step-by-step support to business

owners who are looking to either start out in the green sector or to further develop their green business.”

- “There is a strong need for nowadays to foster and maintain the continuity of the green mindset for the new generations, but also as a sustainable way to make more money under an ethical environment. This project is very important not only because it adds value to what is green entrepreneurship training in Europe, but also because it can constantly remind about the need to stay green on a daily basis.”
- “The project website acts as a one-stop-shop where individuals and businesses interested in the green sector can access training materials, but can also get inspired from the success stories and contact existing green businesses through the observatory if they have specific questions about how their business was developed.”
- “The combined approach of face to face and online curriculum is best, as it allows enough interactivity but also independent and reflective study and research, while getting practical skills to start a business in the green area.”
- “The case studies were also commended in terms of providing concrete examples of what is possible with the sector and demonstrating the diversity that exists within „Green“.
- “This project is very important not only because it adds value to what is green entrepreneurship training in Europe, but also because it can constantly remind about the need to stay green on a daily basis.”
- VET professionals need a greater understanding of the green economy and green entrepreneurship because:
 - “Green doesn’t mean Renewables only -- there are many dimensions to green such as eco-tourism, organic production or the greening of existing business through recycling or waste management initiatives”.
 - “There are new business models within this sector which VET professionals may not have encountered previously”.
 - “VET professionals have a key role in passing on the right skills and knowledge to the green entrepreneurs”.

4. How Could Green Entrepreneurship be supported

As stated above, “we need green growth because risks to development are rising as growth continues to erode natural capital ... Green growth means fostering economic growth and development, while ensuring that natural assets continue to provide the resources and environmental services on which our well-being relies. Green policies have the purpose and the potential to reduce CO2 emissions. Green labour market policies aim at increasing the level of employment or

improving working conditions within an economy that is transitioning towards a green economy.

If we want to ensure that the progress made in living standards in these past fifty years does not grind to a halt, we have to find new ways of producing and consuming things, and even redefine what we mean by progress and how we measure it.” (OECD, Towards green growth, 2011).

There is a series of lessons learnt during the implementation of GET-UP project that can be used by policy and decision makers in order to support the green growth and to catalyse investment and innovation which will underpin sustained growth and give rise to new economic opportunities:

- ***Increase the awareness/*** organise strong and long term awareness raising campaigns for a direct orientation towards (strong) sustainability and green growth and for the importance of fostering green entrepreneurship, as well as for shifting the behavior of consumers towards environmentally-friendly or green products which is leading to the emergence of the green market. Creation of new markets by stimulating demand for green technologies, goods, and services will create a competitive advantage between responsible and non-responsible companies and will create new job opportunities.
- ***Educate, Educate, Educate!*** Education plays a crucial role in raising awareness of environmental challenges and shaping the attitudes and behaviours that can make a difference.
 - The green education should be started with the pre-school education and be continued through the formal education of all ISCED levels, and informal organisational training, as a lifelong learning basic competence.
 - The work-based learning and the provision of better career guidance can be powerful tools to strengthen the link between skills development and the green-growth agenda of countries.
 - A special attention should be given to the need for an adequate educational approach for Green Entrepreneurship.
 - VET professionals should be given the adequate skills and tools for getting a greater understanding of the green economy and green entrepreneurship, so that they can support and encourage new business ideas in the green sector.
 - A green sector apprentice program can also be introduced to “teach learners how to manufacture green products for example, and then at the end of the 4 year programme they can be supported into self-employment”.
- ***Integrate green solutions*** in all institutions. This should be started with the national and local government/ authorities institutions.

- **Create** a “more favorable and pro-green *policy framework* within Governments”.
- **Create a national network for green entrepreneurs** that could offer mentoring and support for start-ups, networking for existing businesses and could apply for funding as a collective. It could also be “a space which raises an awareness of opportunities within the green economy”, which offers “training pills to traditional business sector to “green” their businesses” or which provides “mentoring between established green entrepreneurs and start-ups.” The open exchange (lesson learn) of green knowledge is an important factor that can open new opportunities for commercial transactions and economic pay offs while encouraging the community/society, along the path to an effective and efficient green economy.
- **Consider Eco-Innovation** as a primary enabling factor for green economy. While it is not the only element in creating a green economy, innovation can be a fundamental lever in guiding the EU systems towards a radical transformation of green practices. Adoption and diffusion of eco-innovation are extremely important, even more so than invention, for the benefits of innovation to reach a macro-level. Adoption and diffusion are mainly driven by the decisions of companies and other economic actors, and there is a correlation between eco-innovation adoption by companies and the performance of the countries in which they operate.
- **Introduce incentives** for green businesses or for businesses to adopt green practices and processes in their business and to reduce emissions and to become more environmentally conscious. The incentives should be given to green start-ups, existing green businesses or to businesses switching to green processes as grants, tax benefits, subsidies, training vouchers etc.
- **Create the premises for the proper implementation of different national strategies** referring to green economy, with a special focus on green education of large public and of future and existing entrepreneurs.

5. Conclude Note

To be successful, the green economy transformation process requires acknowledgment of the multiple persistent problems faced by Europe today, that require fundamental solutions. In this regard, regular policies and legislations offer no immediate solutions; market creation and commodification in itself is not a solution; nor is incremental institutionalism, but a green education. Saying that, entrepreneurship needs to be considered and treated to the idea that there is something different about entrepreneurial activities that distinguished them apart from other business activities. Especially in Green entrepreneurship, the participants and their activities are of doing something new; rather recycle

processes or products. Not all businesses are entrepreneurial indeed not even all new businesses are necessarily entrepreneurial.

Achieving a green economy requires long-term thinking and actions, the widespread application of a coherent framework that drives profound changes in dominant structures and thinking, and includes the promotion of innovation, extensive recalibration of fiscal instruments and innovative financing initiatives, breakthrough green project such as GET-UP. Comprehensible integration of objectives across all stakeholders is required, treating economic, social and environmental performance objectives as equal.