

Research Innovation Staff Exchange
Programme (RISE)
H2020-MSCA-RISE-2014



Project carried out with a financial grant of the European Commission

Midterm Report no. 2

Technical Report | Public

Transforming European Women's Entrepreneurship: The Education and Training for Success Programme

Project acronym: *women entrepreneurs*

Grant Agreement Number:	655441
Date of Issue:	01/03/2018
Period of Reference:	01/03/2016 to 28/02/2018
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Commencement Date:	01/03/2015
Completion Date:	01/02/2019



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1. Introduction

The EU Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan recognises entrepreneurship and self-employment as key for achieving economic growth and for job creation. The under-representation of early stage women entrepreneurs in the business-driven economies of Europe is a complex phenomenon that is determined by various factors, such as socio-cultural, economic, and educational factors. To support women entrepreneurship there is a need for increasing the number of women entrepreneurs and for raising the performance and growth potential. Training and education play an important role in this regard. Relatively little research has been conducted to assess the impact of entrepreneurial education and training programmes.

Training programmes today mainly address entrepreneurial behaviours. However, an understanding of the fundamental competences is critical in the face of the varying challenges and contexts confronting young women entrepreneurs. It is the aim of this project to get a better understanding of the fundamental entrepreneurial competences of early stage women entrepreneurs and to develop an educational and training programme that enables early stage women entrepreneurs in Germany and Ireland to develop the fundamental competences to facilitate their entrepreneurial success. We believe that we can significantly contribute to the EU Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan, with the proposed activities strengthening the sharing of knowledge in Europe.

The purpose of this project is to set up and strengthen international and inter-sector collaboration in the research field of entrepreneurial competence development. The main objective is to get a better understanding of the fundamental entrepreneurial competences of early stage women entrepreneurs and to develop an educational and training programme to enhance the ratio of young successful women entrepreneurs across Europe.

The second Midterm Report (i.e. the present document), submitted in February 2018, provides information on the development of the study framework and survey methods, the development of a training programme and the implementation of a pilot training programme as well as the evaluation of the pilot and its revision.

Additionally, the report comments on the administrative project management and the project coordination, as well as the exploitation, dissemination and outreach activities performed during the period.



2. Provision and Evaluation of the Education and Training Programme

The activities described in this section refer to Work Package 4 of the project ('Provision and Evaluation of the Education and Training Programme'). As the activities under Work Package 4 are still ongoing, only those completed are described here.

Task 4.1: Develop the framework of the study (D4.2)¹

The women entrepreneurs' education and training programme is based on a survey of more than 300 women entrepreneurs from Germany and Ireland. The programme has been developed to enhance the capacities of early stage women entrepreneurs of micro and small enterprises from the service sectors in Germany and Ireland and increase the success of their overall entrepreneurial performance.

The framework of the evaluation model was developed in 2016/2017 ahead of the beginning of the pilot run of the online training programme. The evaluation model is based on the Kirkpatrick Model, which lays the foundation for evaluating the effectiveness of the Women Entrepreneurship education and training programme. The evaluation framework includes a three-phase data collection: data are collected before, shortly after and at least four months after the intervention, i.e. the blended learning training programme (T0, T1 and T2). While first drafts of the evaluation model included testing in two groups, an intervention and a control group, the idea of having a control group was disbanded after the pilot run. Participants will complete the questionnaires before (T0), shortly after (T1) and at least four months after the training (T2), to measure long-term effects of learning transfer. Moreover, the quantitative approach will be complemented with a qualitative approach: semi-structured (guideline-based) interviews will be carried out after the participation with a sample of participants.

After the pilot run of the training programme (first round) had been implemented in 2017, participants' involvement in learning activities and the online platform were analysed based on tracking data. Moreover, six participants were interviewed after the programme - including participants who did not complete the programme yet - to learn about their experiences during the learning programme.

¹ Please note: The tasks have been numbered according to their sequence in the project proposal.



Task 4.2: Translate the survey instruments for measuring the learning motivation, the entrepreneurial success, the learning transfer climate and the work environment respectively into German or English, pre-test and revise (D4.1)

The developed survey instruments include:

- **a questionnaire for the baseline test (T0)**, before the start of the training programme. It includes questions on learning motivation, the work environment, entrepreneurial success as well as managerial skills based on self-assessment, knowledge-based tests and performance indicators.

This questionnaire was slightly adjusted following the pilot run. The knowledge-based tests in particular did not sit well with some participants, as they felt being examined. In order to avoid participants' discomfort or even anxiety caused by knowledge-based tests, it was decided to replace them with closed-ended questions on their experience with selected work methods.

- **a questionnaire for evaluation of learning and behaviour** directly after participation in the learning programme (T1), including questions on managerial skills (self-assessment), Identity complexity, entrepreneurial orientation, self-efficiency, success and performance as well as learning satisfaction. Moreover, socio-demographic and company related data are collected.
- **a questionnaire (T2) for a follow-up survey, results, and learning transfer** including questions on managerial skills, learning transfer, identity complexity, entrepreneurial orientation, self-efficiency and success and performance.
- **Interview protocol and interview guidelines** for qualitative interviews after the participation in the programme

All survey instruments were translated into German, respectively English. They were pretested, and slightly revised after the pilot run of the learning programme.

The survey framework, programme evaluation methods and survey instruments were presented in detail in the interim report (D4.1) submitted in month 28.



Task 4.3: Test the motivation to learn of the participants of the programme group (D4.2)

Participants' motivation to learn will be tested as part of the T0 questionnaire (baseline data), to be completed before the start of the training programme. It consists of 17 questions, to be answered along a 5-scale Likert scale.

The learning motivation test is based on an adaptation of the German questionnaire from Müller et al (2007) "Skalen zur motivationalen Regulation beim Lernen von Schülerinnen und Schülern" which is based on the Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ-A) developed by Ryan and Cornell (1989). The theoretical background is the self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2002). This theory creates a differentiated conception of the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The original questionnaire was adapted to the learning motivation in an entrepreneurial context. Based on the data collected, a self-determination index (SDI) will be calculated.

Outcomes will be described in the final report about the entire project in month 48 (D4.2).

Task 4.4: Provision of the blended-learning training including face-to-face learning modules

The Moodle platform of the Women Entrepreneurs learning programme is available at: <https://training.womenentrepreneurs.info> (login required)

Pilot run (2017)

The pilot run of the blended-learning training was launched on 3 June 2017, starting with a kick-off meeting where all participating women entrepreneurs were invited. The programme was initially designed as a 16-week programme, requiring an investment of approximately 5 to 8 hours per week.

The pilot run of learning programme set off with a kick-off event. The kick-off event took place on 3 June 2017, simultaneously in Jena (for German participants) and in Dublin (for Irish participants). Both meetings had comparable structure and content. Overall, 17 women entrepreneurs participated in the kick-off: 10 participants for the kick-off event in Dublin, and 7 participants for the kick-off event in Germany.

During the pilot run, the participation in the online training and the level of activity on the Moodle online learning platform turned out to be lower than expected. Participants did not share many of their activities in the forums, although student tutors were actively present as learning facilitators. Technical support was offered as well, to assist participants with usability issues, but was not consulted very frequently. Furthermore, a relatively high dropout rate was observed. As a result, several adjustments were made to the Moodle platform and also to the structure of the learning programme following the pilot run, in order to invite participants' more active contribution to and use of the online learning platform.



Based on the evaluation of the pilot run, the following adjustments have been made to the training programme:

- Units 1 and 2 were merged. In contrast to the pilot run, there is no mandatory unit anymore; participants can freely choose the units they wish to complete.
- The number of learning hours that participants are expected to invest per week was reduced to approximately 3 hours per week (from 5 to 8 hours per week in the original programme design).
- The usability ('user-friendliness') on the Moodle learning platform has been improved.
- The networking activity has been revised: While this used to be an individual exercise during the pilot run, it has been redesigned into a unit called 'Networking and Reflection'. As part of this unit, participants will work as a group on a blog.
- The number of face-to-face meetings as part of the training programme has been increased from one to three.
- The number of tutors has been increased, reflecting participants' feedback requesting more guidance and assistance throughout the programme.
- The total number of participants being admitted to the programme has been increased, allowing a larger number of women entrepreneurs to take part for free in the learning programme.

The key objective of these modifications was to make the learning programme and platform more attractive and easy to use and follow, but also setting stricter deadlines for completing the learning tasks, keeping a healthy balance between pressure to perform and encouragement. Furthermore, the project team sought to make the video clips more visible and improve its integration into the platform and the learning programme. Furthermore, a web designer was subcontracted to work on the visual aspects of the learning platform.

First full run (forthcoming: February 2018)

The first full run of the learning programme will begin in February 2018, with a total number of 72 participants (as of end January 2018): 60 participants from Germany, 12 participants from Ireland. This 'imbalance' is a result of a much higher demand from women entrepreneurs in Germany than in Ireland to take part in the programme. It is assumed that this can at least partly be traced back to the fact that the learning programme in Ireland competes with several other programmes and initiatives offered to promote women entrepreneurship, which is not so much the case in Germany.



3. Project Management and Coordination

Task 1.1: Administrative project management

Administration and project management were conducted by the project coordinator, FSU. FSU is the single point of contact between the participants and the EC, responsible for the overall financial reporting of the project and for leading the consortium to ensure a successful overall result.

All contractual agreements (D.1), legal and financial issues, as payments, cost statements, audits and financial plans as well as organisational issues, as reporting, meetings, deadlines, project monitoring and reviews are being overseen by the project coordinator.

The Exchange Controller Board (ECB) is the principal decision-making body of the project for all strategic, long-term as well as for medium-term decision. Each project partner has nominated one representative to the ECVT with due authorisation to discuss, negotiate and agree on relevant issues related to the project. Furthermore, two researchers involved in secondments are also part of the ECB.

Task 1.3: Organising periodic meeting assemblies

The project coordinator organises project meeting once per year, to gather all project partners. It gives all project partners the opportunity to meet face-to-face once per year, in order to discuss the project activities, timeline and progress, to reflect on research and outcomes as well as to organise and coordinate current and future project activities, thus ensuring a coordinated and efficient way forward for the project. Due to long traveling distances, project meetings take place jointly with other project activities (e.g. secondments and workshops).

The first periodic meeting (D1.3) after the kick-off meeting was held from 28th to 30th March 2016 (month 13) at Universidad del Norte (UN) in Barranquilla, Colombia. The third face-to-face meeting took place in July 2016 (on the premises of FSU Jena, Germany), as part of the Midterm Review meeting of the project. The fourth periodic face-to-face meeting was held in July 2017 at FSU Jena (month 29). The meeting was combined with a workshop and career development coaching. Most meetings were organised in conjunction with workshops (cf. Task 1.6).



Task 1.4: Organising periodic tele-conferences

The project coordinator organises regular tele-conferences (usually using Google Hangouts as a tool) to exchange with project partners on current activities within the project, to keep all partners up-to-date about progress and agree on the activities that lie ahead. After each meeting, key points discussed were summarised and documented in meeting minutes.

Task 1.5: Periodic reporting to different entities

To ensure a continuous documentation as well as transparency and traceable execution, all participants provide information on their ongoing work to be reported to the project coordinator.

The project coordinator and project manager provide reports on a regular basis. These reports include technical reports on project management and process as well as reports on different project outcomes.

Reports (D1.5) submitted so far

- **a mid term report (month 12)** with a focus on the activities during the project start and the development of the research framework.
- **an evaluation report (month 24)** on the evaluation framework which is used to evaluate the learning transfer during the training programme.
- **this report**, which is the second mid-term report (**month 36**) with a focus on the project progress, implementation of the learning programme and evaluation of the learning transfer.

Task 1.6: Organisation of the workshops

Three workshops were organised during the project period do far.

Workshop 1 (D1.8) was organised in conjunction with the kick-off meeting and took place from 26 to 29 March 2015, hosted by Universidad del Desarrollo (UDD) in Santiago, Chile.

Workshop 2 (D1.8) took place from 28 March 2016 to 1 April 2016, on the premises of Universidad del Norte (UN), Barranquilla, Colombia. The meeting consisted of three days of workshop for the whole consortium and two days of career development for the early stage researchers (ESR). The 1st part of the workshop was dedicated to analysing information gathered by the senior researchers who made progress in the scientific debate about the



theoretical approach. The ensuing debate gave all team members present the opportunity to participate in a solution based working progress.

The 2nd part of the workshop was dedicated to learning opportunities. Early stage researchers were trained through lectures in new possibilities and methods in order to implement new ideas in the Women Entrepreneurs Project. Day 1 was about a method called “Design Thinking.” During this lecture participants were challenged to develop a new way in order to approach an existing problem. This method, which was first developed by scientists at Stanford University, can be used to rebuild the structure of creative thinking.

Day 2 began with an update about the concept of blended learning. Following, the team was introduced to the idea of “flipped learning” and a possible use for the educational programme, digital tools and hints for e-learning. The final lecture was about the methods of developing and optimizing teaching at university level. The benefits of teaching development, valuable insights and personal experiences were presented.

Workshop 3 (D1.8) was held from 10 to 12 July 2017, as a three-day event, on the premises of FSU Jena in Jena, Germany. All project partner institutions were represented at the workshop through at least one participant. Key points on the agenda were a) the design of the learning programme (didactic approaches, objectives, structure, current structure and first experiences), b) the finalisation of the video development and its presentation, c) a discussion of the learning programme evaluation procedure and d) a group discussion on planned and possible future dissemination and exploitation activities for the project. Project partners furthermore discussed current matters of project management and administration.

The three-day workshop was followed by a two-day Career Development coaching for experienced researchers within the project. The following project researchers participated in the coaching: Jörg Markowitsch (3s), Carlos Albornoz (UDD), Jesus Arroyave (UN), Jana Schmutzler (UN) and Käthe Schneider (FSU).



4. Exploitation, Dissemination and Outreach Activities

Task 4.1: Project website

The project website (D5.1) was developed in the beginning of the project and has grown since. It includes information on the project, project partners and project progress. Moreover it links to the training programme and describes how to enrol in the training programme. Moreover it provides all project reports published so far to ensure transparency for everyone interested in the project.

The project website is used for dissemination and outreach activities. Moreover, a Google Drive Working Space was created. It is used by all project partners to exchange about the project, share project documents and organise the working process. This is also supported by the use of Google “hangouts” tools and chats, which enable direct virtual exchange.

The website is linked to the social networks used for dissemination of project results. The project website can be found at <http://womenentrepreneurs.info/>

Task 4.2: Dissemination activities

The dissemination plan (D5.2) outlines all dissemination activities planned during the project. It aims for increased public awareness on women entrepreneurship, dissemination of project outcomes to specific target groups as well as researchers through publications and other dissemination activities. All dissemination activities follow a target group approach. Three target groups were defined and dissemination activities were planned in order to meet the target group's interests in the project. The target groups include the scientific research and innovation community, the women entrepreneurs including stakeholders and networks and the public audience and policy makers.

Following the dissemination plan, progress can be described in the following main areas of activity:

- **Identification of stakeholders and networks** for exploitation of results: Entrepreneurship and women entrepreneurship networks in all partner countries were identified and informed about the project. A close collaboration was established with the VdU network in Germany (Association of German Businesswomen (VdU), which represents the interests of business women across different sectors in manufacturing, craft trades, retail and the service industries and is one of the largest associations in Germany), and the Enterprise Ireland network in Ireland (which is the government organisation responsible for the development and growth of Irish enterprises). Due to this cooperation, the networks disseminated the Women



Entrepreneurship project to their members, either during meetings and conferences or within their Newsletter. This was of specific value, as the networks advertised the Women Entrepreneurship training programme and encouraged their members to participate.

- **Knowledge transfer to research and innovation community:** Project results were presented in various ways to the research and innovation community. Project outcomes were presented at conferences (such as e.g. 17th Biennial EARLI Conference). Articles were published in peer-reviewed open access journals. Project outcomes are also published at the project website, including a policy statement on Women Entrepreneurship in Germany and Ireland.
- **Coordinating dissemination activities between the partners.** To make sure all partners are involved in dissemination activities and also are updated on ongoing project activities, a regular internal newsletter was implemented. The newsletter is published at least twice a year and supports the coordination of dissemination activities and other project activities among partners.

4.2.1 Scientific research and innovation community

Overview table: scientific research and innovation community

Group	Researchers in the field of entrepreneurship and/or education, social sciences.
Messages	Project outcomes, methodology, theoretical background.
Media	Presentations at conferences, journals, newsletters, podcasts
Resources needed	General folder, posters, presentations.
Activities completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Podcast 1: General background of the project • Project Brochure for the academic world • Women Entrepreneurs Programme at the 9th Iberoamerican Academy of Management Conference (2015, Chile) • Women Entrepreneurs Programme at the “Unternehmerinnen Kongress” (2016, Germany) • Thüringer Zentrum für Existenzgründungen und Unternehmertum (TheX) (2016, Germany) • Women Entrepreneurs Programme at the Thematic Business University Forum in Vienna (2016, Austria)



Most recent activities completed

2016

- **“Knowledge Exchange Platform for Key Enabling Technologies”** event (November 2016): presentation of a poster on the Women Entrepreneurship project to stakeholders and interested researchers and students.

2017

- **Peer-reviewed publication** ‘Promoting the Entrepreneurial Success of Women Entrepreneurs Through Education and Training’ by Käthe Schneider. *Science Journal of Education*. Vol. 5, No. 2, 2017, pp. 50-59.
- **Peer-reviewed publication** ‘Entrepreneurial Competencies of Women Entrepreneurs of Micro and Small Enterprises’ by Käthe Schneider. *Science Journal of Education* Vol. 5, No. 6, pp. 252-261.
- **Submitted Paper** “Una aproximación al Edu-Entretenimiento como estrategia de comunicación para el cambio social y de comportamiento” by Jesús Arroyave, Jair Vega. *Communication and Society*.
- **Women Entrepreneurs Forum Oldenburg**: Keynote Speech presenting the project (2017, Kaethe Schneider) to researchers within the female entrepreneurship field at German universities, board members of entrepreneurship centres at German universities. Participation in workshops and open discussions on female entrepreneurship and informal talks about the project.
- **APPAM International Conference**, hosted by MGSOG / UNU-MERIT (Maastricht University) and Syracuse University (2017) for researchers from international universities. Project team members participated in open discussions, plenary sessions and roundtables on entrepreneurship and e-learning.
- The **17th Biennial EARLI Conference**, hosted by the University of Tampere, Finland on "Education in the crossroads of economy and politics – Role of research in the advancement of public good". Kaethe Schneider gave a presentation on “Entrepreneurial Competencies of Established Women Entrepreneurs in Germany and Ireland”.
- In August 2017 project results were presented during a **panel discussion at the University of Lüneburg** (Carlos Albornoz)



- In November 2017 the project was also presented during a **Horizon 2020 event** in Halle, Germany.

2018

- A proposal to present the Women Entrepreneurship project at the Austrian Conference for Research on Vocational Education and Training (**Berufsbildungsforschungskonferenz - BBFK**), as part of the Poster Session, in June 2018 in Steyr, Austria was submitted (acceptance pending).
- **Peer-reviewed publication** Schneider, Kaethe & Carlos Albornoz (2018). Theoretical Model of Fundamental Entrepreneurial Competencies. Science Journal of Education. Vol. x, No. x, 2018, pp. x-x. doi: 10.11648/j.xxx.xxxxxxxx.xx

4.2.2. Women entrepreneurs, including stakeholders and networks

Overview table: women entrepreneurs including stakeholders and networks

Group	Women entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship organisations, stakeholder groups
Messages	Project outcomes, learning programme.
Media	Presentations at meetings and conferences, website, social media
Resources needed	General folder, posters
Activities completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook account and site • Campaign: Because your experience matters (photographic campaign, posters, social media) • Video interviews with women entrepreneurs • Policy brief on women entrepreneurship in Ireland and Germany

Most recent activities completed

2016

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- **Video documentation on female entrepreneurs:** The video documentary was presented at the “Girls Day” in April 2016 and uploaded to the project’s social media accounts and the project's website.

2017

- **“Wir-Unternehmerinnen” Messe** - “We, female entrepreneurs” fare: At the exhibition for women entrepreneurs (2017) in Ruhr Region, the project and the learning programme were presented to potential participants.
- In March 2017, the Women Entrepreneurship project and the learning programme were disseminated to female entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship networks in the region of Thüringen, Germany.
- The **IHK Information Day 2017** had a focus on female entrepreneurship, involving regional women entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial networks as well as regional offices of German organisations supporting entrepreneurship. The project was presented and the training programme was advertised to potential participants.
- **The start-up event “VR Edition”** was organised in May 2017 by BTK Berlin (University for Art and Design) and Startup Germany. National and regional entrepreneurial networks and organisations supporting entrepreneurship as well as start-ups and researchers attended the event. The Women entrepreneurship project and the learning programme were presented.
- At the **Unternehmerintag Mitteldeutschland** (Female Entrepreneurship Day) in May 2017 the project and the online learning programme were presented to female entrepreneurs as well as entrepreneurial networks and regional offices of organisations supporting entrepreneurship.
- At the **campaign day** “Nachfolge ist weiblich” (Emulation is female) in June 2017, the Women Entrepreneurship project and the learning programme were presented to female entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial networks.
- In October 2017 Kaethe Schneider was invited expert at the **CONFINTEA VI Mid-Term Review 2017**, in Suwon, Republic of Korea, where she had the opportunity to pay particular attention in the policy recommendation to entrepreneurial education of women across the life course.
- At the **founders week** (Gründerwoche Deutschland) in Berlin, Germany in November 2017 the project was presented to female entrepreneurs and other interested women.

2018



- In January 2018 the blended learning programme was presented on the **LEARNTEC**, the biggest e-learning fair in Europe.
- The blended learning programme was presented at the **DIDACTA**, the world's biggest education trade fair in February 2018.
- The existing **leaflet**, informing interested audiences about the learning programme (in German and English), was updated in early 2018, to reflect the adaptations to the programme following the pilot run. The leaflet was thus brought up to date ahead of the first full run of the training programme, starting in February 2018.



4.2.3 (Interested) Public audience

Overview table: Public Audience

Group	Interested individuals, women interested in entrepreneurship.
Messages	Project outcomes, awareness on entrepreneurship in general, how to become a female entrepreneur.
Media	Presentations at public events, Social media.



Resources needed	General Folder, Flyers, Posters, Giveaways
Activities completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Logo design• 4 Press releases• Blog• Entries at project partner websites

Most recent activities completed

2016

- In 2016, the Women Entrepreneurship project was presented at the **Girls Day in Jena**, organised by the public employment service. The presentation included a workshop and discussion with girls as well as a presentation of a video with interviews with women entrepreneurs.
- In April 2016, the project was presented at the regional **Girls Day**, organised by the public employment service.

2017

- At the beginning of 2017 the women entrepreneurship learning programme was reported in several **German journals and newspapers**. Most of them advertised the registration phase of the online learning programme (for the first pilot run).
- In February 2017, the FSU issued a **press release** to inform media and potential participants on the training programme for female entrepreneurs. More than 15 regional newspapers and online media used the press release and published an article on the upcoming training programme.
- A workshop for interested audience on the EU-project and self-reflection, using the outcomes of the Women Entrepreneurs project was held at the “**Nights of Arts and Science**”, at FSU Jena in November 2017.

2018

- At the beginning of 2018, the women entrepreneurship learning programme was reported in several **German journals and newspapers**. Most of them advertised the registration phase of the online learning programme (for the first full run).

Task 5.3: Knowledge transfer and exploitation of results



An exploitation plan (D 5.4) was published in October 2017. It includes a market analysis as well as plans to ensure a sustainable and long-lasting continuation of the project objectives. It describes the strategy for further exploitation of results, including research results and the Women Entrepreneurship learning and training platform.



5. Literature

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