



VET SCHOOLS AS ENTREPRENEURIAL HUBS

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Introduction

The challenge: VET schools fighting old-fashioned perceptions

VET schools as entrepreneurial hubs VET systems across Europe can boast a wide diversity. However, many VET schools fail to acknowledge and come up to their essential role in securing a smooth transition for young people into the world of work. Whereas integration of start-up pre-incubation services feels like second nature to Higher Education Institutions, like-minded initiatives in VET schools are scarce despite the fact that it should make perfect sense, since most have often managed to develop close-knit networks with local employers.

This cooperation with local businesses in the shape of apprenticeship schemes and other actions constitute consolidated practices that would help explain the growing popularity of the vocational tracks.

The unique position of VET schools: bridging education and marketplace

With a highly relevant curriculum and close connections with the marketplace, VET schools are in an unbeatable position to put forward an ambitious entrepreneurship education agenda. Ad-hoc subjects have been designed and embedded in national VET curricula together with widely adopted mini-company schemes and business ideas contests. Quite interestingly, this already positive picture has been enriched in the last years with the irruption of a growing concern about the pedagogical aspects of entrepreneurship.

In spite of its low prevalence, the integration of start-up incubation units in VET schools could start boasting about some promising results in terms of business creation and survival rates of companies started by VET students. Just this fact makes it worth having a proper look at the start-up pre-incubation services put in place in order to identify essential elements to scale them up.

About IncuVET

IncuVET is a 2-year project (2014-2016), co-funded under the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union and implemented by a transnational Consortium of 8 expert partners from Spain, Belgium, Finland, Estonia and Greece.

The overall vision underpinning the IncuVET project contemplates “an improved understanding and better rounded provision of Entrepreneurial Education and Start-up Support in VET Schools”. In this line, the IncuVET consortium is set to identify basic elements of an ideal VET school-based entrepreneurial support system, drawing on existing initiatives and best practices among the consortium and beyond, and to provide an information hub to collect material, stir the debate and discussion, in an effort to embed some of the learning taking place during the project lifetime into the VET school structures.

IncuVET envisages to support and promote an innovative role for VET schools as local/regional hubs for entrepreneurship, beyond the mere provision of start-up advice. VET schools are in a position to stir a multi-stakeholder process where local authorities, employers, start-ups, teachers and students come together to shape the way entrepreneurship education is embedded in the curriculum and learn from each other in a collaborative way, with valuable impact on the schools, the students, the market and the community as a whole.

The workshops promoting best practices in Europe

The main tool of the IncuVET project is the organization of four (4) thematic workshops/study visits at the premises of the partners involved in the project, which constitute best practices of entrepreneurship education in Europe. These workshops promote the exchange of know-how, the building of synergies and the cooperation at European level.





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Workshop 1 Creating a Vision: VET Schools as Entrepreneurial Hubs

7/8 May 2015 @ Espoo, Finland

InnoOmnia, an innovation development unit within [Omnia](#), a multisector vocational education provider and regional development center, with entrepreneurship at its heart represented an excellent benchmark initiative to set the tone of the project. Partners got familiar with this interesting experience of whole-school approach to entrepreneurship in VET.

InnoOmnia was established in 2011 and is composed by 200 new/would be entrepreneurs, 1,000 teachers and school leaders trained, 700 Omnia staff exposed to new pedagogies, having hosted more than 3,000 visitors. It is steering a multi-stakeholder process where academics and students come together with local authorities, employers, start-ups to shape the way enterprise is embedded in the curriculum and learn from each other addressing challenges that touch upon a variety of aspects related with entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial education.

www.incuvet.eu



The partners of the incuVET project were thoroughly presented the strategy, objectives and practices of InnoOmnia, met and discussed with professors, students and entrepreneurs involved in the forward-looking initiatives implemented and tried some of the services offered by the school to clients from the region and beyond.

Click [here](#) for the full report | Click [here](#) for the agenda

What we think about InnoOmnia...IncuVET project partners share their insights!

Valnalón (project leader)

Ivan Diego

“A radical innovation hub combining the worlds of learning and work”

By bringing together entrepreneurs, students and teachers from all levels of education, InnoOmnia is breaking boundaries and is in itself a radical innovation hub combining the worlds of learning and work. We can hardly think of a better venue to host the first IncuVET project workshop aptly titled “Creating a vision: VET Schools as Entrepreneurial Hubs”.



Knowl Social Enterprise

Sofia Ioannou

“An example to follow and get inspired from”

Walking around InnoOmnia, hard work, enthusiasm, inspiration, innovation and commitment are evident among the students and the staff, who are willing to commit even personal time and effort at the centre to work on their projects. InnoOmnia is providing entrepreneurship education in a unique way: fostering an entrepreneurial mindset not necessarily with the aim of creating start-ups but for the purpose of developing a sense of initiative, responsibility and professional readiness. In this respect, acquaintance with working life and methods are a daily part of education, including in the form of interaction with entrepreneurs running their own businesses amongst and oftentimes together with students. To me, it's evident that InnoOmnia should represent for all VET schools a best practice, an example to follow and get inspired from in order to educate, guide and nurture the next generation's entrepreneurs!





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What we think about InnoOmnia...IncuVET project partners share their insights!

Militos Consulting S.A.
Christina Frentzou

“InnoOmnia: a real entrepreneurial hub 'run' by students”

In every corner of InnoOmnia, the presence of the students, their contribution, their creativity and hard work is astounding. From the Africa room, to the design corner and the InnoOmnia restaurant, the added value of VET is at its best. InnoOmnia has formed an interactive learning environment and at the same time a small scale marketplace, a real entrepreneurial hub, 'run' by students, fostering hands-on knowledge and experience in a unique way, bringing together different aspects and ways of practice and promoting exchanges in different areas. It is an inspiring place where students can have a glance at their future and start building it from within.



Vocational Center of Pāmu County
Sirje Pauskar

“A buzzing community of people with a passion for innovation and entrepreneurship”



InnoOmnia focuses on project based learning, student entrepreneurship models and entrepreneurial teaching methods. One of the methods is playful business game, e.g. www.tyonhakupeli.fi. As you play, you learn. Learning by doing, developing and exploring. The second method in business administration curriculum, is 3 days of theoretical lessons and 2 days practical lessons in Omnia. Third is Omnia handicraft shop, where students can practice their theoretical knowledge. Besides that, Omnia offers training, rent out workplaces, but

above all is a buzzing community of people with a passion for innovation and entrepreneurship. Aims at ensuring employability and successful careers and life paths for Omnia students. I liked that InnoOmnia's aim is to increase innovation on the grassroots level and ensure high quality VET education through supporting art and crafts field entrepreneurs and work-based learning programs. They pilot new pedagogy for vocational teaching and entrepreneurial teaching methods.

www.incuvet.eu



SYNTRA Flanders

Ben Bruyndonckx Sabien Lasure

“InnoOmnia: strong seeds to make an entrepreneurial hub grow”

The strength of the InnoOmnia approach is - in our interpretation and understanding - threefold:

1. InnoOmnia has a VISION on entrepreneurial education: the drive to embed entrepreneurial education within the organization is very clear and strong
2. InnoOmnia actively encourages the development of an entrepreneurial ecosystem within and around the organization and its students: we note as key points that the organization
 - has strong contacts with local authorities and the overall educational policy makers;
 - brings together (staring) entrepreneurs and students: they are working/learning/interacting at the Omnia locations;
 - offers very flexible VET pathways, bringing together entrepreneurs and apprentices;
3. InnoOmnia encourages strong pedagogical EE approaches: the integration work placements, use of social media,... and this seems to be very successful, reducing significantly the drop-out rate.

The main challenge/pitfall/threshold for InnoOmnia is a rather universal one: it's 'getting the message across': How to stimulate 'non-believers' (trainers, teachers,...) to participate in EE and thus avoid a burnout of the 'believers'.





Tknika

Inge Gorostiaga Bitor Arias

“Creativity and innovation seem to be floating in the air”



From the very first step, you can perceive Omnia as being a lively institution. Creativity and innovation seem to be floating in the air. At once, you get the feeling of being about to know a really

comfortable place and a dynamic working environment. Omnia seems to be fully supportive of the entrepreneurial spirit and fosters it through several training programmes and projects and through work-based learning practices. Omnia encourages professional relationship between students and entrepreneurs. As entrepreneurs work regularly at the school, students can be close to them and share co-working spaces, a fact which enables them to be aware of the real world of business and entrepreneurship.

Kick off meeting in Espoo, Finland

In parallel with the inspiring workshop, partners of the incuVET project held their first, kick-off, meeting in Espoo (Finland). The meeting, hosted by Omnia meant the official launch of the project. Discussions focused on the planning of the activities, such as the thematic workshops, the visibility of the project and the best possible ways to create an information hub to nurture, enhance and support an improved understanding and provision of Entrepreneurial Education and Start-up Support within VET Schools.



Next workshop on 20-21 October 2015 in Zamudio, Spain

The second workshop “Back to basics: Start-up support in VET” will place its focus on pre-incubation and start-up support in VET Schools. Partners will share and discuss the pros and cons of different services and tools. Spanish project leader Valnalón and partner Tknika as workshop hosts will walk partners through different initiatives to integrate start-up incubator in a local VET School.

Stay tuned!

Get Involved!

Our information hub available at www.incuvet.eu hosts practices, information, readings on entrepreneurship education in Europe and beyond. We welcome contributions from teachers, researchers, students, entrepreneurs, VET trainers, HE institutions, business schools and other potential collaborators, that would like to share good practices on Entrepreneurial Education and VET, or articles informed by their own experiences in Entrepreneurship Education, inspired by texts, news or policy debates etc.

Visit the [website](http://www.incuvet.eu) and see how you can contribute to our initiative! Contact us at info@incuvet.eu.

Looking forward to receiving your insights!

www.incuvet.eu



Erasmus+

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