

Resolution adopted at the EPP Congress, St. Julian's (Malta), 29 – 30 March 2017

Innovative entrepreneurship

The European People's Party has a long-standing record of supporting entrepreneurial spirit through concrete measures and programmes at European level. In times of high unemployment and low growth rates across the continent, we need to support the young generation in gathering entrepreneurial experience so that their business ideas can lead into more successful companies and thus create well-paying jobs for the future. Entrepreneurial spirit does not just fall from the sky; it must be learned, taught, promoted and set free by the right framework conditions. Our schools and universities should form the basis for entrepreneurial thinking by teaching the necessary skills that people need to run their own company. As a next step, young entrepreneurs should gain additional experiences abroad by working in different companies and sectors. Together with the possibilities of the Internet and new technologies, this new generation of young entrepreneurs should then be able to sell their products and services to new markets all around the globe. In this context, we need innovative financial solutions in order to start and scale-up such companies as can create wealth and the jobs so greatly needed in our societies.

Entrepreneurship in school and university curricula

Entrepreneurial skills and mindsets can be learnt and further developed, from primary school onwards until university and even beyond. Education in entrepreneurship prepares people to become responsible and enterprising individuals. It should help people to develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to achieve the goals they set out for themselves. Evidence also shows that people with entrepreneurial education are more employable and at the same time more likely to set up their own companies compared to the general population average. Therefore, respecting fully the principle of subsidiarity in the area of education, we need to give much more attention to the topic of entrepreneurship in school curricula and in higher education. Rather than being taught as a single subject, entrepreneurial thinking should be taught as a cross-sectional topic.

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs

The Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Programme (EYE) was initiated by the European Union in 2009 with the objective of helping entrepreneurs to enrich their experiences through learning and networking and by spending periods of time in enterprises run by experienced entrepreneurs in other participating countries. Hence, start-up and would-be entrepreneurs gain additional competencies and perspectives which will prove invaluable during their business start-up phase. Furthermore, the host entrepreneur benefits from the fresh entrepreneurial spirit and the knowledge of the home market and culture of the young entrepreneur, possibly resulting in new business opportunities.

In a globalised world, we should not limit the scope of such programmes solely to the European Union and its immediate neighbours, but on the contrary should enable European

participants to participate worldwide in the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme. This would represent an attempt to better position European companies in foreign markets, at the same time improving their competitiveness at an international level. The best way to counter Euroscepticism is to provide concrete measures to our citizens, with clear added value associated with the European Union. Gaining professional experience abroad which is beneficial at a later stage of one's career would be just such a measure.

Decision-makers at European and national levels should therefore level up the EYE programme to an international scale and provide the necessary financial means to increase significantly the European Commission's current goal of 10,000 participants by 2020, to 30,000 participants by the year 2025.

Removing barriers for the Digital Single Market

The Internet and digital technologies are changing significantly the way we work. Companies have to adapt their operations accordingly in order to deal with the business environment changing all around them. At the same time, the new technologies make it technically much easier to offer products and services across borders in new markets. However, existing barriers online mean citizens cannot make use of potential benefits, while companies and start-ups cannot make use of all their available digital tools. Therefore, we need to make the EU's Single Market fit for the digital age — bringing down regulatory walls and moving from 28 national markets to a single one. Such an effort would contribute up to € 415 billion per year to Europe's GDP, while creating hundreds of thousands of new jobs. We call on Member States for their full commitment in achieving this.

Access to finance

Access to sufficient financial means during the creation phase of a company, and later on when major investments are needed in the scaling-up of an enterprise, is decisive for the survival, growth and sustainability of a business idea. During the seed and start-up stages, technology-driven, high-growth SMEs can obtain equity financing from entrepreneurs or from family and friends. In earlier stages, self-financing is particularly important since innovative entrepreneurs cannot overcome information asymmetry and therefore rarely find any lender or investors, even for potentially profitable projects. Subsequently, financing may be supplemented by seed capital investment from informal private investors (e.g. business angels) and, in a few cases, by seed financing funds and venture capitalists. In the expansion stage, increasing amounts of equity are required to maintain research and development activities and to expand marketing and sales activities. Decreasing bureaucratic hurdles for innovative forms of financing would help young entrepreneurs to broaden their funding sources and make it much easier for them to sustain the first difficulties of creating a company.