Promotion of entrepreneurial skills through E-learning

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Abstract
In this paper we would offer solutions for the SMEs sector in the post-crisis period, focusing on entrepreneurial culture development through educational tools. Except for the national and European programs for SMEs development (see Summits’ Programs for launching the Eastern Partnership), the society needs skills and abilities in business management. In order to satisfy this crucial need we must create distance courses for potential businessmen, which would allow them to simultaneously learn and activate in the field.

1. European Commission dealing with SMEs problems

The SME’s sector has the major share in the total number of enterprises and it represents the pillar of national economy, while its contribution to creating work places it’s enormous. One of the facts we should mention is the underdeveloped entrepreneurial culture in Moldova, despite the forecasted raise of small enterprises in the post crisis period. While the non-profit organizations keep offering consultancy for SMEs and the Government has modified the educational plans in professional schools and universities, by introducing classes in the business field, the problems related to developing entrepreneurial skills of individuals that are already employed or run businesses remains unaddressed.

The policies concerning the entrepreneurial activity become crucial in the context of the crisis and they relate to the world wide business environment. The major goals of these policies are to support and facilitate the process of creating new companies, also to establish a dynamic business environment where every business has access to both local and international markets. We should also mention that especially SMEs are the most important reserves for employing work force that is unemployed due to the crisis.

Even before the crisis, in order to support this grand economic force under the name of “Small and Midsize Enterprises”, the European Union implemented a set of programs, oriented particularly to improving the European SME’s environment:

1. The entrepreneurial spirit – development and skills
2. Improving access to financing sources.
3. Supporting research and innovation
4. Ensuring fair competition

We will briefly refer to the first two programs mentioned above.

The entrepreneurial spirit – development and skills

Entrepreneurs - individuals with a developed business sense that can transform an idea into a profitable company are the primary driving force of a prosperous economy. They also represent the key factor for creating work places, increasing economic development and competitiveness of the European economy during and after crisis. Never in history has the access to updated information and knowledge been more vital for creating a competitive set of skills and guaranteeing a secure job.

The European Union is actively promoting lifelong learning: the access of all Europeans to education and professional development during all their active life. EU is targeting to stimulate individuals’ abilities and update their qualifications.
Another important aspect of this program is that the communitarian financing offered to all EU regions is used for supporting and developing ideas in the field of entrepreneurial education. The European Social Fund is the primary communitarian source that offers financial support, addressing human resources issues and sustaining development of professional and business skills. During 2000-2006, The Fund has offered approximately 70 billion Euros for projects all over Europe. The same amount is planned to be assigned for 2007-2013.

**Improving access to financing sources.**

At present the European Commission is implementing a set of programs specially designed for improving the financial environment in the European SME’s sector. Through the financial tools that the European Commission has developed, it provides guarantees to SMEs, which facilitates the process of obtaining loans from the bank. In the same context, the European Commission helps SMEs with obtaining venture capital investments. These financial instruments are managed by the European Investment Fund (EIF), on behalf of the European Commission.

The Commission also cooperates with local authorities for improving the financial environment for small and midsize enterprises. Through experience exchange and best practices between national governments, the Commission allowed its member states to generate tangible improvements in the SMEs financial environment. The Commission also got involved in the negotiation process between bankers and small enterprises in order to identify and reduce the barriers that SMEs can encounter during financing.

2. **Entrepreneurship in Moldova - problems and solutions.**

Considering the financial situation in Republic of Moldova the governmental financial instruments are at its minimum, while the only chance for ‘survival’ are the funds acquired by citizens working abroad, which are now returning in the country. The vast majority of these individuals had acquired certain experience and know-how in different areas, but in order to apply this new knowledge they would need business skills and abilities, skills which they weren’t able to develop in the soviet period. Consequently, this is our first subject: **The entrepreneurial spirit – development and skills.**

The business skills are needed by all individuals in order to successfully manage a business. This is the Universities and both governmental, and non-governmental institutions must act as promoters of entrepreneurial culture. When analyzing these matters, there is a set of issues that need to be addressed:

- **how** exactly and **where** do we settle the actual educational process
- **where** do we get the necessary financial resources

We can certainly forecast that a vast majority of individuals, that came back from abroad will either seek employment or start a new business. So for these active individuals, with high chances of success and accomplishment, the training and education in the entrepreneurial field is a vital necessity.

What solutions can we offer in order to satisfy this need? One way would be to conduct **e-learning studies** with business profile. This way only we can insure the entrepreneurial development of a virtually unlimited number of individuals, and most important, **without interrupting their professional activity.**

Nowadays, this type of learning can be easily implemented with the e-learning platform “Moodle”. Both, institutions, as well as teachers involved in the entrepreneurial education, have to find the best way of developing a full, efficient educational plan for this field. Subsequently, cooperating with e-learning professionals, the institutions must implement a complete, comprehensive course of **entrepreneurial distance learning.**
What are the benefits of this type of learning?
- Minimal expenses of implementing and managing the educational process.
- Flexibility – the students can choose the time, the place and the pace of their studies, thus the studying process becomes an individualized one.

This form of studies will open a tremendous amount of opportunities for most professionals; it would also help individuals considerably increase their income. In what concerns businesses, this educational method, would exponentially increase the chances of success for entrepreneurs and would guarantee a profitable business.

BIBLIOGRAPHY