



# **European Youth Forum Position Paper on Youth Entrepreneurship**

ADOPTED AT THE COUNCIL OF MEMBERS/  
EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
BRAGA, PORTUGAL, 17-20 NOVEMBER 2011

## Executive summary

At a time when Europe is facing many difficulties and challenges, the need for strong and innovative youth, ready to face the challenges presented to them, is greater than ever before. One way in which Europe can impact positively on young people, in a reinforcing and supportive manner is via entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship has long been an exceptional form of employment, as well as a remarkable way of fostering innovation across the business spectrum and reinforcing social and environmental values. In this Position Paper on Youth Entrepreneurship, the European Youth Forum affirms its belief that young people deserve the chance to impact on society, as well as to create stable futures for themselves, via the means of enterprise. However, youth often find themselves disadvantaged, especially when attempting to embark on entrepreneurial endeavours. The lack of finances and resources available, as well as an unfortunate and devastating lack of support from educational and governmental structures means that young people often find entrepreneurship a sector simply too difficult or even impossible to break into.

This Position Paper addresses the main issues affecting young people's ability to enter into the world of entrepreneurship. These include knowledge, inspiration, and skill deficiencies, a lack of governmental and educational support, and the obvious lack of financial resources plaguing the younger generation. While some have been able to overcome these problems, far more have been left unable to join the world of entrepreneurship due to their distressing inability to rise above these issues.

Thus, the European Youth Forum reaffirms the need for stable, enabling, and supportive environments through which youth can enter the field of entrepreneurship; adds its voice to those affirming the innovative and impactful nature of the entrepreneurship; and believes that the innovative and impactful nature of entrepreneurship will only be made stronger through a higher representation of young people.

### 1. Introduction

In order to earn a living and become independent most people seek to become employees without exploring the possibilities of becoming an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship is not only a form of employment but also a way of realising innovative ideas and solutions. Entrepreneurship creates jobs, fosters wealth for society as a whole and, particularly via social entrepreneurship, including green entrepreneurship, contributes to community development, supports environmental sustainability and produces social capital. With high levels of youth unemployment in Europe, entrepreneurship is increasingly seen and proposed to young people as an alternative way to be active in the labour market, get income and realise their potential. However, the number of young people that engage in entrepreneurial activities is still relatively low.

Thus, the European Youth Forum seeks to both define the key issues surrounding youth entrepreneurship and give proposals on how to promote entrepreneurship among young people. This paper argues that many young Europeans could potentially embark on

entrepreneurial careers as a way of gaining their autonomy, and contribute to society by using their skills to develop new and innovative industries, including renewable energies and products that promote sustainable consumption, as well as to contribute to creating social capital and promoting social inclusion.

The European Youth Forum raises the topic of youth entrepreneurship by looking for explanations for what the main challenges and obstacles are for young people in engaging in entrepreneurial activities. The European Youth Forum believes that young people should have the same chances in this respect as others and their specific needs have to be adequately addressed to avoid that this particular age group is underrepresented in the business environment. Young aspiring entrepreneurs are particularly vulnerable since they need to process a huge amount of new information, they have inadequate access to institutional support, limited access to initial capital, and they are often put off by strict laws on bankruptcy and high administrative burdens. Likewise, compared to other age groups, young people do not have as much life experience and primarily gain their knowledge and skills within the formal education system. Entrepreneurship education therefore becomes a decisive factor. The promotion of the values of entrepreneurship has to start at an early age, and should be followed later by more targeted entrepreneurial learning at school and in non-formal education activities. To secure a supportive and encouraging environment for aspiring entrepreneurs, ideas of entrepreneurship need to also be explained within society at large.

## 2. Problem description

Eurostat defines those that are self-employed, entrepreneurs, as persons who work in their own business, professional practice or farm for the purpose of earning a profit.<sup>1</sup> As definitions across countries vary, people that are self-employed can both be those that have employees (also called employers) and those that work alone.<sup>2</sup> The European Youth Forum also supports definitions that emphasise the positive community and environmental influence of people that engage themselves in “social” or “green” entrepreneurship. These people are dedicated to look beyond achieving profit and seek to ensure that their business has a positive social or environmental impact. It is important to note that much entrepreneurship is not just self employment but also entrepreneurship through the establishment of co-operatives and other forms of organisation that establish democracy in the workplace. Co-operatives are as described by the International Cooperative Alliance “an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations, through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise”.<sup>3</sup>

The number of young people engaged in entrepreneurial activities remains relatively low. Only a small percentage of young people are actually running their own businesses and it is impossible to conclude from statistics what type of entrepreneurship they are engaged in. According to the EU Youth Report, only 4 % of young people aged 15-24 and 9 % of those aged 25-29 in Europe were self-employed in 2009. The main reasons why 15-39

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<sup>1</sup> Eurostat, (2003), "Labour force survey: Methods and definitions, 2001 Edition", page 12

<sup>2</sup> European Employment Observatory Review, (2010), “Self-employment in Europe”, page 6

<sup>3</sup> International Co-operative Alliance, <http://www.ica.coop/coop/index.html>

years olds have a preference for employee status rather than being self-employed are that they prefer regular, fixed income; stable employment with fixed working hours and protection by social security or insurances.<sup>4</sup> In addition, evidence suggests that, compared to adults, young people are disadvantaged in various areas with regard to entrepreneurship, for example, young people face problems of access to resources, especially capital. As a result, young people start their enterprises with lower levels of initial capital, are engaged in a narrower range of activities, are more likely to work from home, and are more likely to rely on limited or insufficient equipment.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the European Youth Forum is concerned about obstacles hindering youth entrepreneurship, for instance the military conscription that still exists in 15 Council of Europe Member States.

Youth entrepreneurship clearly offers a lot of potential for young people, however if compared to other regions people in Europe are less likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities and the levels of entrepreneurship among young people are the lowest. The main reasons for that are:<sup>6</sup>

a) Insufficient knowledge, inspiration and skills:

Among the main reasons mentioned by 15-39 year olds as to why it would not be feasible to become self-employed in the near future was not only the lack of business ideas and opportunities but also lack of skills<sup>7</sup>. This is a clear signal that there is not sufficient investment in quality entrepreneurship education and despite the current efforts more need to be taken.

b) Insufficient start-up support and help in maintaining and expanding

Access to finance is the most significant obstacle to starting up a business, as mentioned by 26.5% of 15-24 year olds and 41.3% of 25-39 year olds.<sup>8</sup> Different kinds of practical support are also lacking in the process, particularly relating to creating a sustainable business that can expand in the future. For example, administrative procedures are often seen as too complicated, acting as an obstacle to successful entrepreneurship .

c) Lack of stability and security

The need for young people to feel stable and secure with regard to their income, social protection, health insurance, and the ability to reconcile work and family life should not be underestimated. There is not enough information about the existing welfare and insurance systems and most of them do not ensure minimum protection to people who are entrepreneurs. The social taboo of failure and bankruptcy further alienates young people from choosing entrepreneurship.

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<sup>4</sup> European Commission, (2009), EU Youth Report “Youth – Investing and Empowering” , page 36

<sup>5</sup> Francis Chigunta, (2002), ‘Youth Entrepreneurship: Meeting the Key Policy Challenges’, page 6

<sup>6</sup> The following issues were raised in the framework of the Structured Dialogue with youth on youth employment, during both the consultations in the Member States and the EU Youth Conference in Jerez, Spain in April 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Eurobarometer survey, (2009), ‘Entrepreneurship in EU and beyond’ page 119

<sup>8</sup> Eurobarometer survey, (2009), ‘Entrepreneurship in EU and beyond’,page 119

### 3. Calling for more entrepreneurship opportunities

Young entrepreneurs face many obstacles to successfully realise their entrepreneurial ambitions. Therefore, **an environment that is youth-friendly, enabling, encouraging and supportive is needed**. It is important to keep in mind that young entrepreneurs require a different approach and more guidance might be necessary than would be required for people who have more experience. Information must be available about the nature of the labour market, about the functioning of welfare and health systems as well as the entrepreneurship related knowledge that is required to set up a business.

The European Youth Forum and its Member Organisations have already highlighted that there needs to be more support to enhance opportunities for young people to successfully engage in entrepreneurship. The YFJ Policy Paper on Employment states that young people should be in a position to consider self-employment and entrepreneurship as a viable option for their career with measures in place to support this goal, including the simplification of administrative procedures for young people, more information about social security systems, better access to business incubators, and most importantly – the integration of entrepreneurship in school curricula from an early stage, involving youth organisations in developing these education programmes.<sup>9</sup> Equally important are the competences that youth gain through non-formal education and informal learning from activities in youth organisations. Therefore, general support for youth organisations is crucial for developing entrepreneurial skills amongst youth.

Also, as part of its work to fight the unprecedentedly high levels of youth unemployment, the European Youth Forum has been advocating to both EU Member States and other European countries to introduce youth guarantee policies to ensure that no young person is left out of employment, education or training for a period longer than four months.<sup>10</sup> Policy measures, encouraging, enabling and promoting entrepreneurship, are one way to reach this aim.

Youth entrepreneurship and self-employment was one of the key topics addressed in the EU Structured Dialogue with Youth implemented during the Trio Presidency Spain-Belgium-Hungary under the theme of youth employment. At the EU youth Conference in Jerez, Spain in April 2010 young people and representatives from the various Ministries of Youth Affairs from the 27 Member States of the EU identified the following priorities to be addressed:

- Entrepreneurship should be encouraged and all young people willing to become entrepreneurs should have equal opportunities to do it;
- Procedures linked to entrepreneurship should be simplified;
- Better information on entrepreneurship and support programmes is required;
- There is a need to support new ideas and improve access to loans and EU funding programmes.
- There is a need for specific training and support in going through the complex

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<sup>9</sup> See 0813-07 European Youth Forum`s Policy Paper on Youth Employment

<sup>10</sup> See 0570-10 European Youth Forum`s Position Paper on Youth Guarantee

procedures.<sup>11</sup>

The Treaty of Lisbon has given the EU the competency to undertake actions to support, coordinate and contribute to the Member States' actions on youth matters and thus more effectively implement the goals of the Youth in Action Programme, as well as the strategy "Youth – Investing and Empowering". Common measurable and specific goals in the field should be set by taking into account country specific youth entrepreneurship issues. Focusing on country specific problems through detailed analysis will contribute to an inclusive policy and decision-making in the field of youth entrepreneurship.

Policies and their implementation should be synchronised between EU level, national level and local level. This is how cohesion and balanced development could be achieved especially regarding certain regions and rural districts. A multi-sectoral approach is needed as youth entrepreneurship does not depend on a single policy field. Basic policies are education and innovation, finance and economy, social and labour affairs, regulation and service delivery. Not only strategic measures should be drafted, but also methods of implementation through coordination between institutions.

Building partnership networks should be encouraged and supported. Networking at local, national and EU levels is a method of sharing experience and good practices. Partnership is a factor for expansion of entrepreneurship that brings more opportunities for financing and international action.

### 3.1. Role of formal education

Young people agree that formal education has a vital role when it comes to encouraging entrepreneurship, as it reaches most young people in a structured and measurable manner. Boosting entrepreneurship equally among young boys and girls and young women and men should be done through an education system starting at an early age that encourages creativity, self-confidence, critical thought, active citizenship and participation. Learning by doing should be the key method used in this process. **Schools should provide time, space and recognition for projects initiated by young people themselves, including projects through which pupils can act as peer-educators and multipliers.** This would foster a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, and give young people the confidence to try new projects, which can be a beneficial asset in their later attempts at setting up independent business.<sup>12</sup> Besides that, education providers have a responsibility to teach not only about economically- but also socially- and environmentally-focused entrepreneurship and other models of entrepreneurship structures such as through the establishment of co-operatives.

In the Eurobarometer survey "Entrepreneurship in EU and beyond" respondents were asked how they perceive the role of their school education in raising an interest in entrepreneurship and the results prove that there is still a lot of space to invest in

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<sup>11</sup> Joint conclusions of the Spanish Presidency EU Youth Conference "youth employment and social inclusion", Jerez, Spain 13-15 April 2010

<sup>12</sup> See 0622-07 European Youth Forum's contribution to the consultation "Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> century"

education in this regard - only half of all the respondents agreed that their school education had helped them to develop an entrepreneurial attitude. And if compared to other parts of the world none of the EU Member States reached the levels measured in China, Turkey and the US where more than two-thirds of respondents agreed that their school education had helped them to develop entrepreneurial attitudes. Responses coming from Iceland, Norway, Croatia, Switzerland also reported better results.<sup>13</sup>

However, the same survey results show positive developments of entrepreneurial education at schools over the last years as the youngest respondents and those still in education were the most likely to agree that their school education played (or had played) a role in preparing them to become an entrepreneur. For example, more than 6 in 10 full-time students (63%) and 15-24 year-olds (61%) agreed that their school education had helped them to better understand the role of entrepreneurs in society. Across all other socio-demographic segments, however, less than half of respondents agreed that this had been the case (34%-49%).<sup>14</sup>

Continued efforts need to be invested to communicate the values of entrepreneurship among school children, starting with the youngest, and adopting appropriate methods for every age group of school children in order to efficiently showcase that entrepreneurship is not a last resort when no other form of employment can be found, but that it can be an inspiring, progressive and engaging activity. **Entrepreneurship education has a crucial role and the approach of integrating it in formal education system should be further promoted and strengthened**; the same goes for teachers who need to be properly trained. Young people should be made aware of how the labour market works and of opportunities in developing industries such as renewable energy, sustainable transport, and new media. The cooperation of educational institutions with existing entrepreneurs and with the civil society is, a positive and welcome first step, in terms of providing expert support in organising creative workshops, inviting guest lecturers and similar. Building upon this, **support structures and funding for mobility should be improved, and new pathways for mobility should be created**. Networks for mobility that would enable young or aspiring entrepreneurs to learn from peers throughout Europe, should be created or expanded. In rural areas, entrepreneurship education and training should be adapted to the rural areas facing challenges with urbanisation, infrastructure and new ways of farming. In vocational education and training students should receive entrepreneurial education that is matched with their future vocation.

The European Youth Forum calls on governments to enable formal education curricula to promote and support creative thinking and entrepreneurial skills in young people. **Career-oriented training and guidance and contact with entrepreneurs and civil society from local environment should be integrated at all levels of education** in preparation for a future career, both for employment and entrepreneurship for all young people. Moreover, guidance and counselling play an important role. Sufficient **free and high quality counselling and guidance services** are hugely important for guaranteeing quality in all educational forms, and must always be focused on the needs and abilities of each individual student, be it in guidance at the end of elementary/secondary schooling,

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<sup>13</sup> Eurobarometer survey, (2009) 'Entrepreneurship in EU and beyond', page 97-98

<sup>14</sup> Eurobarometer survey, (2009) 'Entrepreneurship in EU and beyond', page 104

guidance for students in vocational education or training, counselling in higher education, or other levels. The approach should always be one of encouragement and support to young people's potential rather than discouragement in the form of excessive administrative and/or financial barriers.

The formal education system doesn't provide financial literacy for young people which is of utmost importance living in today's society. Financial literacy can be decisive when young people establish a company - good skills and knowledge of finance will allow it to run successfully and independently. Therefore it is **very important to introduce financial literacy in all forms of education for aspiring entrepreneurs.**

The formal education system does not include all young people as some drop out from school at an early age, therefore it is important to establish ways of how to reach all young people. **Special focus is needed with regard to disadvantaged young people** who are not in employment, education or training. Although this is primarily a task for governmental institutions such as public employment services, non-governmental actors also have an important role to play.

### 3.2 Role of non-formal education and youth organisations

Non-formal education and the informal learning taking place in youth organisations and civil society are a basic and **ideal environment for promoting a culture of creativity, personal and professional development, self-responsibility and self-expression and contribute to the employability of young people.** Youth organisations play the leading role in non-formal education, so they should be considered as the experts of understanding and satisfying young people's needs for self expression. Furthermore, establishing and building up a youth organisation can be considered as a form of entrepreneurship in itself that fosters a culture of entrepreneurship among young people. Therefore, support to youth organisations and youth initiatives to be further strengthened.

A key aspect in becoming an entrepreneur is having the confidence and ability to take your ideas forward and to build on existing contacts and networks in order to test, market and promote a product or service. In order to do that young people need to build up so called "soft skills" such as negotiation, mediation, public speaking and the ability to coherently express themselves. In youth organisations this takes place through non-formal education which in its essence consists of actions, activities, processes and projects that are undertaken by, with or for youth with the aim of providing a space for young people for their personal development and for their needs. It also allows young people to apply these skills and knowledge in practice. By forming youth organisations throughout Europe, a coordinated effort is made by young people to represent and advocate for their concerns as a societal group. The process shows us that, if given a possibility, young people have the necessary entrepreneurial skills to build well rooted and effective organisations.<sup>15</sup> Being an entrepreneur requires a high-level of independence and, most importantly, confidence. Active participation in youth organisations or broader civil society, running

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<sup>15</sup> See 0367-10 European Youth Forum's Position Paper on the Current Status and Perspectives of European Youth Work & Policy on Youth Work

youth activities, developing and implementing projects, or taking initiative to participate in society greatly contributes to bringing about an entrepreneurial culture. These activities also help young people to see how their actions can positively influence their communities and society in general and can help to advance a new generation of socially minded entrepreneurs. Youth organisations provide young people with access to a learning environment that does not condemn failure. They should receive increased investment in order to maximise the potential of their work.

In recent years youth organisations have demonstrated their aptitude in tackling employment issues, including promoting entrepreneurial mindsets among young people. Recognising that issues relating to employment and entrepreneurship have a transnational context, youth organisations have been organising in international platforms in order to address these issues in a holistic way. For example, through the Youth Employment Action project<sup>16</sup> of the European Youth Forum, youth organisations from across Europe have exchanged best practices and organised international meetings on topics such as quality internships, interview preparation and developing an entrepreneurial attitude among young people.

**Youth organisations are key actors in promoting and enabling youth participation and active citizenship**, and therefore are an important resource for the inclusion of young people in general. Youth organisations welcome young people whatever their social backgrounds and locally run youth projects can have considerable success in re-motivating and reconnecting young people who have fallen through the net of statutory services with society, for example, youth that are neither in education and training, nor in employment (also called NEETs). Nevertheless the role that youth organisations play in the social inclusion field has not yet been fully recognised.<sup>17</sup>

It stands to reason that **youth organisations should be involved and consulted** in developing policies on youth entrepreneurship, for example educational curricula, and should be engaged in jointly promoting youth entrepreneurship with partners such as trade unions and employers' organisations, as well as education institutions. European **funds must be available for youth organisations to fulfil these tasks**. The European Youth Forum strongly supports the European Commission's message that 'Member States should ensure that European Social Fund swiftly supports young people' as outlined in the Youth on the Move Communication.<sup>18</sup>

The Youth in Action programme should also partly focus on socio-economic needs and should support young people in their personal development through non-formal education, volunteering and participation. Furthermore it should facilitate the full use of the competences acquired in other educational pathways and in the labour market through various instruments such as European Qualification Framework, Europass and Youthpass.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> For more information: <http://www.youthemploymentaction.org/>

<sup>17</sup> See 0070-07 European Youth Forum's Policy Paper on Social Inclusion through Youth Participation

<sup>18</sup> EC Communication "Youth on the Move" COM(2010) 477 final, [ec.europa.eu/education/yom/com\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/yom/com_en.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> See 0567-10 European Youth Forum's Position Paper On Youth in Action 2.0

### 3.3 Risk taking and security

Entrepreneurship is associated with risk taking and uncertainty. Turning entrepreneurial ideas into reality is a difficult task that has no guaranteed success. As already mentioned, **although risk taking is an inevitable feature of entrepreneurship, it can be controlled and reduced.** There should be **access to balanced and objective information** on what it means to have your own business, for example, young people have to be made aware that running individual and microenterprises can often mean low incomes and long and non-standard working hours.<sup>20</sup>

Another important subject is **social security of young people** who, as entrepreneurs, are in most countries themselves responsible for assuring their social welfare. Doubts about welfare provisions and health insurance can stop young people from choosing entrepreneurship as a real alternative to waged employment. In most countries this would mean being fully responsible for one's own social security payments, holidays and other social benefits, also health insurance can be more expensive and less accessible. All these aspects require good knowledge of the different systems in place but also ability to save and plan one's earnings. When targeting young people and encouraging them to become entrepreneurs, these aspects cannot be neglected and therefore need to be properly explained. At the same time governments have to continue **modernising social security systems by adapting them to the new ways of how income is earned in society - basic social and health protection has to also be available to all young people who are engaging in entrepreneurial activities.** Trade unions have to step-up their efforts, especially in protecting self-employed but also those running individual enterprises.

In some countries there is a trend of "false self-employment" where employers encourage their employees into registering as self-employed while the nature of work and the ways it is delivered does not change.<sup>21</sup> The existing differences in requirements between employed and self-employed thus allow employers to save costs at the expense of social security payments. **Actions should be taken to stop such trends of false self-employment** and efforts should be put into assuring that both employed and self-employed people can enjoy equal levels of access to social security and insurance. Regarding aspiring young entrepreneurs, efforts should be put into explaining the importance of social security contributions and health insurance both in short and long term.

As young people have less experience, when encouraging them to choose entrepreneurship as a means to become autonomous, **professional guidance and counselling should be widely available**, especially in the early steps of starting their

<sup>20</sup> European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, (2009), Self-employed workers industrial relations and working conditions, page 63

<sup>21</sup> Eurofound definition of false or bogus self-employment: formal self-employment which is fraudulently used to disguise contractual relationships which should be properly registered as dependent employment, in order to avoid the protections and costs (both wage and social contributions) connected with the latter, specifying whether it concentrates in any sectors and/or occupations.

own business.

### 3.4 Creating sustainable businesses

A key to successful business is also its sustainability, ability to change, to adapt and to grow. These are equally challenging tasks that need adequate support along the way. In reality large numbers of enterprises are not able to survive long-term and can easily go bankrupt. To avoid such occurrences from demotivating young people for future activities it is especially important both to prevent such failure for young people as much as possible but also make young people aware of the challenges to entrepreneurship.

To enable motivated young people to put their entrepreneurial ideas into practice and ensure that they are sustainable in the long term, the European Youth Forum calls upon European, national and local policy makers to put in place different supportive measures. First of all **local, national and European Youth Entrepreneurship Strategies have to be created and implemented** to ensure that there is a consistent policy behind all the measures to increase youth entrepreneurship. One of the main aims of these strategies should be the harmonisation of regulations across countries. There has to be adequate funding to secure successful implementation of these Strategies. The European Social Fund should further stimulate entrepreneurship with a special focus on youth entrepreneurship.

Young people need **more information about the already existing entrepreneurship support programmes and services** and it has to be provided according to a one-stop-shop principle to make sure that all the necessary requests can be handled quickly and efficiently. Also, young people need better and more accessible information about the different ways to promote and develop their ideas, for example, expert advice on whether to choose to set up an individually owned enterprise or a cooperative. Furthermore, assistance and advice should include support for the development and sustainability of co-operative business models. More effort needs to be put into informing and educating aspiring entrepreneurs about the process of accessing capital as it often can require rather specific and technical knowledge, in this regard financial literacy among youth needs to be significantly improved.

Four very important concerns for young people to encourage them to become entrepreneurs are **reduced administrative obstacles, harmonised regulation, bankruptcy laws that are more favourable to young entrepreneurs and adequate access to finance**, especially microcredit. Microfinance programmes need to be further expanded and adapted to the specific situation of young people. Better access to business incubators, better training and business services are also among the critical aspects, as young people face challenges such as analysing markets and finding a market niche. Less bureaucracy and administrative burdens for entrepreneurs could be achieved through the introduction of one-stop-shop service delivery, e-government and better regulation.

**Assistance and guidance should also be guaranteed after the creation of a business**, as sustainability of a newly established enterprise can be a great challenge, as is the decision to expand the business either into a new sector or even a new country. The

European Youth Forum believes that there is a lot of **untapped potential for intergenerational solidarity to become a tool to enhance the transfer of knowledge** from older experienced entrepreneurs to young aspiring entrepreneurs. Bringing together people with different backgrounds with a strong interest in entrepreneurship can have a multiplier effect that should be encouraged, especially in a life long and life wide learning context. Such networking opportunities allow to discuss, share experience, motivate, give new business ideas and overall enhance interest in entrepreneurial activities.

#### 4. Conclusion

The European Youth Forum believes that young people should be in the position to consider entrepreneurship as a viable career option and this choice should not make them worse off than those who choose waged employment. Youth entrepreneurship has a lot of potential to be a tool in the hands of young people to achieve their autonomy and contribute to the development and progress in the societies that they live in.

Young people are invited and encouraged more and more to choose entrepreneurship, however only a small percentage take this path. The reasons are clear – having a brilliant entrepreneurial idea or wishing to develop a business that can make a positive contribution to society is not enough as not all have the necessary skills, knowledge, support and freedom to make it a reality. The European Youth Forum urges further investment in quality entrepreneurship education programmes and business support schemes while creating a special focus on young aspiring entrepreneurs. The European Youth Forum believes that young people willing to start their own company have different needs than those efforts that are foreseen for general population.

While entrepreneurship education is and should continue to be supported as a pivotal element of youth entrepreneurship, the formal education system does not reach all young people. While calling for a specific focus on delivering entrepreneurship education to these young people through other channels as well, the European Youth Forum urges to recognise the role of youth organisations as facilitators of social inclusion of young people, as providers of entrepreneurial skills and knowledge through non-formal education and most importantly as builders of active civil society.

Besides the aforementioned factors, the European Youth Forum recognises that insecurity and instability are significant obstacles that prevent young people from realising their business ideas. We believe that this can be diminished by improving access to information and guaranteeing minimum social and health protection to young entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, the European Youth Forum strongly believes that future entrepreneurship started by the young people of today can and should be encouraged to be driven by the ideas that allow ecological and social progress in our societies. Europe must lead the way with a **holistic approach to green and social entrepreneurship as well as innovation.**