



MOBILE LEARNING TO UNLEASH
HOUSEHOLDS BUSINESS POTENTIAL



M-House kick-off event report

Management skills from your house to your professional life: Boosting households' entrepreneurial potential

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The conference entitled “**Management skills from your house to your professional life: Boosting households' entrepreneurial potential**” has taken place on Thursday, February 06th 2014 at the Representation of the State of Hessen to the European Union, in Rue Montoyer, 21 – 1000 Brussels. The conference was the opening event of the M-House project funded by the European Commission under the Grundtvig Lifelong Learning Programme. The main aim of the project is to raise awareness of the entrepreneurial skills of adults in charge of managing a house or a family.

The conference started with a welcoming introduction by Mr **Jochen Marsch**, Head of Unit of Higher Education, Research and the Arts of the Representation of Hessen, who pointed out how Europe needs better skills for a better employment and to find a better use for skills that are already present in our society. The underlying principle of the M-House project is that running a house is not entirely different from running a business and there are overlapping skills that need to be raised; raising awareness of these entrepreneurial skills is what the M-House project aims to realise in the upcoming 2 years.

After his introduction, Ms **Marta Bronzo**, head of the European Desk of the Belgian-Italian Chamber of Commerce (CCBI) and M-House project manager, introduced the M-House project - **Mobile learning to unleash households business potential** -, its consortium and the main activities all partners will carry out during the 2-year lifespan of the project. Ms Bronzo introduced the organization leader of the M-House project, the **Belgian-Italian Chamber of Commerce**, a Belgian organization fully recognized by the Italian government active in European affairs and in different projects focused on entrepreneurship and vocational training. The Belgian-Italian Chamber of Commerce is coordinating a partnership of several organisations from 6 different states:

- **Fulda University of Applied Sciences**, German university specialised in households economics;
- **Institute Inter.research e.V.**, a German non-profit association who will provide technical knowledge for the development of the online course;
- **Cooperative for Innovation and Development of South Italy**, an Italian organization involved in adult learning education;
- **Kozminski University**, an internationally renowned business school located in Poland;



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- **Anne Fox**, a young consultancy in Denmark who contributes as quality evaluator;
- **International Federation for Home Economics**, an international organization involved in the dissemination activities through their European network;
- **Association for Lifelong Learning in Rural Areas**, a non-governmental organization based in Romania active in adult education.

The main objective of the project is to raise awareness of the entrepreneurial skills of households; the aim is to increase the number of start-ups and enterprises that will be created as well as to promote the intrapreneurial spirit of households, which means behaving in an entrepreneurial way while you are an employee, a key aspect for career development. The target of the project are households, a term which has a wide meaning including people living alone, flatmates sharing their responsibilities for the house management, couples or even families with children. The main problem the project aims to tackle is that house and family management implies entrepreneurial skills which households are little aware of and the competences acquired are not recognized or are taken for granted. The 8 European partners will work jointly to develop an e-learning training as well as parallel activities to increase the business potential of households and promote their entrepreneurial spirit. More in detail the 8 project partners will identify key-situations that normally households face when carrying out their daily activities at home which imply entrepreneurial skills. Subsequently they will develop e-learning modules accessible from computers and mobile devices aimed to raise awareness within households about the skills and the competences that they were developing carrying out such activities.

A valorisation portal will be implemented during the project, through which the partners want to provide a useful tool that can be used by the learners after finishing the course, a tool where they can put into practise what they have learnt, find information about business opportunities, about possible funding, or information about how to open a new business. Other parallel activities that will be implemented will imply the interaction between learners and entrepreneurs such as, for example, during the next events the consortium is going to organize in Poland and Italy, as well as thanks to the quality evaluation provided by the stakeholders board made up of 25 members.

The audience is then invited to actively take part to the project. As household, one can enrol to the online course: it is planned to have two pilot runs of the training, the first of which will start at the end of this year and the second one the next year in summer. As entrepreneur, one can share the experience with the learners of the course; as adult learning association or business support association, it is possible to promote the course among associated members and finally, as stakeholder, one can be involved in the development/evaluation of the course or contribute to the valorisation portal at any moment. For more information and to get involved: www.m-house.eu.



After Ms Bronzo's intervention, the floor was given to Prof. Dr. **Michael-Burkhard Piorkowsky** – Professor em. for Household and Consumption Economics at the Institute for Food and Resource Economics at the University of Bonn – who presented the academic link between private households and business models.

The traditional idea of modern economics considered households and firms at the opposite side of the market: while firms were seen as the part related to the production of goods and services on the market, households were seen as the part of the consumption; but many activities of the households are related to the production, for example preparing a meal, renting a flat, listing what to buy, etc. These activities involve making decisions that are not related with consumption but are more managerial decisions related to production. In recent years economists have increasingly recognised that a household is truly a “small factory”: it combines capital goods, raw materials and labour to clean, feed, procreate and otherwise produce useful commodities. Entrepreneurial activities and households activities are playing together and, in a revolutionary view, firms are founded in a households context.

In the Households-enterprise-complex, the production function of the unit includes household and market production. The firm is small in terms of employees from outside the household or family, but may have family help, and the management function is carried out by the entrepreneur her/ himself or by a family member. The money income of the household stems to a certain degree from the entrepreneurial activity; special conflicts may arise with regard to ends and means, e.g. investment or consumption, labour or leisure. There is a mental interdependence between work and life: “The firm, that's me”.

During his presentation, Prof. Piorkowsky showed some business concepts of people who started their business from their home activity, for example using in a creative way the art of recycling. He pointed out some statistical evidence from Germany showing three main types of self-employment (full-time first employment, part-time first employment and part-time second employment) giving evidence that most businesses in Germany start in part time as mini-firms and the category of self-employment that has grown more in the last 20 years was the category of part-time first employment.

Examples of the entrepreneurial competencies required in business are organizing and problem-solving skills, ability to absorb setbacks and recovery, communications skills, ability to make sound decisions and to take full responsibility for taken decisions, persistence and patience to wait until the business really becomes successful. Households are basic institutions that provide functions for the society such as economic, political, ecological functions as well as regeneration, procreation and socialization. Therefore, to run a households, some entrepreneurial competences are needed: feeling responsible for one's own actions, setting up responsible life goals, carefully generating and allocating resources, understanding money as a mean, not as an end, starting and running a household and family and making “a house, a home”.



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With his intervention, Prof. Piorkowsky displayed that the competences for running a business are not so different from the competences that households use for running their home and concluded his presentation reminding the participants to think entrepreneurial.

After Prof. Piorkowsky presentation, the floor was given to PhD. **Tarja Römer-Paakkanen** from HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Sciences and Jyväskylä University School of Business and Economics, who explained how to generate entrepreneurship by connecting students' family background, life experiences and different fields of life. The general goals in entrepreneurship education, studies and training are to help students to recognize their own strengths and competencies, to recognize the opportunities that entrepreneurship of family businesses can provide them with, to help students developing their ideas and starting their own business and to encourage and train them to be self-directed, entrepreneurial and proactive.

Family, individual and business issues are not separated but there is an interaction between the different areas of life that must be connected in a new way. Studies demonstrate that many of the students that create their own business come from family activities and start the business from their hobbies. From every field of life you learn entrepreneurial behaviour and you use it for your business. We need to mentor and coach our students if we want to develop entrepreneurship and transfer knowledge to young people so as to make them see new opportunities and reflect on their situation.

The learning environment is composed by three aspects: home and family, the outside world with hobbies and the school environment. The learning outcome of this learning environment is a triangulation between socialization, experiences and education. The family socialization is characterized by learning from the experience of other entrepreneurs and by viewing family members as role models. From the experiences you can transfer activities in a certain life sector to other sectors too and by the hobbies experiences you learn the passion for doing, you become hungry for success and you learn from your mistakes. Regarding the education, the business family background increases the interest about entrepreneurial studies. The process of student entrepreneurs is highly personal and holistic and requires immediate solutions and learning-by-doing. Through activities such as parenting, mentoring, coaching and counselling students create their own personal learning environment, their way of learning and of connecting studies, experiences and skills. This is the path towards growth into entrepreneurship.

If we want to create new entrepreneurship we should move from the traditional pedagogy to a new one characterized by passion, risk taking and curiosity. Start from the idea the students get from family businesses, we have to show them that they have so many opportunities near them if we want them to act in an entrepreneurial way. Therefore the role of the teacher changes from the traditional teacher to a facilitator.

At the end of her speech Ms Römer-Paakkanen has shown how work experiences, entrepreneurship experiences and on-the-job learning can be implemented in higher education



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to enhance students' learning and graduating, and to help them constructing entrepreneurial spirit; the implementation of the entrepreneurship portfolio tool aims to help students and especially potential entrepreneurs benefit their work experiences, tacit-knowledge and family business background in their studies.

Concluding the conference, Ms Marta Bronzo invited the attenders who wished to submit their questions to the speakers to approach them during the networking cocktail that was offered right after the conclusion of the conference.