Baltic Entrepreneurship Partners (BEPART)
From Interregional and International Cooperation to Regional Impact of Entrepreneurship Promotion

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Abstract

This article illustrates the case of the international network project BEPART (Baltic Entrepreneurship Partners) with its activities in entrepreneurship promotion. It starts with some basic thoughts on the understanding of entrepreneurship. The article then turns to European and regional development issues in the Baltic Sea Region by trying to show how the project work responds to related challenges. The next step describes the project goals and structure. Ten propositions on regional entrepreneurship promotion are presented as they represent a set of shared basic assumptions inside the network. They are also intended to be a tool for inducing more far reaching improvements in the field. Knowledge exchange and its effects are another issue that is highlighted. The article touches the topic of evaluation and learning within the project, and finally turns to innovations in entrepreneurship education and its foundations.

Journal of Economic Literature classification numbers: A2, D8, L2, R5

Keywords: entrepreneurship promotion, entrepreneurship education, Baltic Sea Region, regional development

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1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is a popular topic. Entrepreneurship is also a varied, heterogeneous, broad and complex phenomenon, which is difficult to conceptualise and to define. The number of definitions is endless. Thus it appears that the practical work with the issue of entrepreneurship is faced by the problem of defining entrepreneurship once and again. Academics who research the phenomenon have to mark off their research object. Politicians who intend to promote entrepreneurship have to draw up clear-cut programme guidelines. For such practical reasons, entrepreneurship is often limited to business start-up activities. But don’t we eliminate entrepreneurship at the same time if we disentitle entrepreneurship the potential of being surprising, varied, complex, creative into unknown spaces, innovative?

General reflections on the term and phenomenon of ‘entrepreneurship’ mainly relate to ‘start up innovations, bring about change’ within and for a dynamic and changing world. Major proponents of this innovation-perspective like Joseph Schumpeter (1934) and Peter Drucker (1985) highlight that entrepreneurship cannot be narrowed to starting up a business. They applied entrepreneurship also to activities of and within existing companies. Gifford Pinchot (1985) coined the term ‘intrapreneurship’ and focused on entrepreneurial activities even inside corporations only. Recent attraction gains the phenomenon of ‘social entrepreneurship’ as entrepreneurial activity which is directed to sustainable social changes and progress against a current socially excluding equilibrium (cf. Martin, Osberg 2007).

“Entrepreneurship is not an economic category” (Röpke 2002, 2).

We cannot talk about entrepreneurship without referring to freedom of choices and a potential for competition. An inspiring idea or invention will not become an innovation without others who are able and willing to acquire it. Entrepreneurs need to create value and offer a value proposition. This idea can also be applied to entrepreneurship as a general notion and basic concept itself:

- Potential entrepreneurs will have to find the concept attractive and valuable. Otherwise they would opt for alternatives.
- Likewise also those who promote and support entrepreneurship will have to find value within and by the concept. Otherwise they would promote and support alternatives.

This is finally what BEPART is aiming at: to work towards ways which make entrepreneurship a more attractive and inviting concept for potential entrepreneurs and for those who might and can support it (politicians, regional developers, educators, academics). BEPART is an international network project for entrepreneurship promotion and education by 12 partners within the Baltic Sea Region. Its implementation is backed by a (seemingly) growing support for entrepreneurship on regional, national and European levels and political agendas. The value proposition of BEPART is the idea that the stimulation of entrepreneurship will contribute to wealth and competitiveness (in Europe and its regions), as entrepreneurship is seen as the basic driving force of social, technological and economic development.

The network partners of BEPART are universities, a university-related science park and a regional development agency, all with proven activities and competence in entrepreneurship promotion, and located in 8 countries. The overall project objectives of are directed towards
more efficiency and impact of entrepreneurship promotion;
contributing to the development of a creative and responsible entrepreneurship culture.

This contribution aims
to illustrate the concept of BEPART, and
to work out why BEPART is working as it does.

Therefore the goals of this paper are to exemplify and exhibit BEPART as a case, to enable reflection on this case and to stimulate ideas beyond.

To write this paper I refer to published research findings and reports, official project and EU programme documents, and to internal project documents.

2. Entrepreneurship Development in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR): Focus of BEPART

In March 2000, the EU Heads of State of Government launched the ‘Lisbon Strategy’ which aims at making the European Union the most competitive economy in the world and to achieve full employment by 2010 (cf. EU 2007). The promotion of entrepreneurship was made a major objective on the EU political agenda. The subsequent Commission’s ‘Green Paper on Entrepreneurship’ defines: “Entrepreneurship is the mindset and process to create and develop economic activity by blending risk-taking, creativity and/or innovation with sound management, within a new or an existing organisation.” (EU 2003, 6).

Likewise, these political goals mark out some background ideas when shaping the operation and network of BEPART in 2003/2004.

The basic project objectives of BEPART (2004, 12) were defined as:
> Increased efficiency and impact of entrepreneurship promotion at universities and within local/regional networks.
> BEPART, therefore, intends to contribute to the overall objective: Development of a creative and responsible Entrepreneurship Culture in the Baltic Sea Region and Europe at large that can be expected to contribute to a more productive utilisation of scarce human (talents, knowledge) and natural resources, thereby fostering innovation as well as socio-economic development.”

With this strong focus on the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) and on entrepreneurship promotion it is useful to glance first at some basic research findings on the state of competitiveness in the BSR and of entrepreneurship within.

2.1. A Glimpse at Competitiveness Surveys on the Baltic Sea Region

Four out of the top ten ranked countries within the Global Competitiveness Report 2006-2007 are countries of the BSR: Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Germany (cf. World Economic Forum 2006). The report ranks Estonia number 25, ahead a country like Spain (number 28). Latvia and Lithuania are ranked ahead of Italy (42), and Poland follows on rank 48. In view of the wellsprings of competitiveness the Chief Economist Director for World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Network, Augusto Lopez-Claros stated: “Our indicators point to the rapidly growing importance of higher education and training as engines of productivity growth. Countries that, like the Nordics, are investing heavily in education are likely to see rising levels of income per
capita, growing success in reducing poverty and an increasing ability to establish a presence in the global economy.” (Lopez-Claro 2006).

The IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook 2006 shows due to different methods and indicators some different results if compared to the Global Competitiveness Report. Nevertheless, Denmark, Sweden and Finland as leading BSR countries rank very high as well, and Estonia is assigned a position even ahead of Germany. Likewise, a World Bank (2004) benchmarking survey of regulatory conditions in the Baltic Sea States concluded: “Five of the regions members (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Lithuania) rank in the global top twenty for their overall ease of doing business, as measured by a composite ranking of the Doing Business indicators. Germany, Estonia and Latvia are close behind, …” (World Bank 2004, 9).

In 2004, the Baltic Development Forum launched the yearly survey ‘State of the Region Report’ in the BSR. The latest surveys confirm the overall high competitive strengths of the BSR but highlight the partly enormous disparities and regional distinctions between BSR countries and regions (cf. State of the Region Report 2005, 2006). The BSR is a strong but at the same time heterogeneous meta-region, of which differences become eye-catching the more one approaches regional and local levels. Strong disparities between BSR countries exist for example in the quality of education (State for the Region Report 2006, 41, table 6). A strong human capital base is fundamental for competitiveness in innovation-driven economies, and the highly-educated population is seen as a key asset and driver of the BSR (State of the Region Report 2005, 49). But: “So far, the human capital and knowledge flows between the countries are relatively small and regional cooperation on education and research is limited” (ibid).

Among the policy tools which aim at fostering innovation, integration and competitiveness in the BSR ‘cluster development’ has become more than a new buzzword for BSR countries and regions (State of the Region Report 2006, 67). Clusters may develop on the basis of strong and competitive business environments but “… not just in regions which pursue cluster programs.” (ibid. If cluster initiatives shall be successful, joint efforts of the public and private sector (often termed ‘triple helix’ of business, government and academia) are seen as necessary (State of the Region Report 2005, 43).

### 2.2. Looking at Entrepreneurship in the Baltic Sea Region

Results of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2006 (GEM 2007) illustrate the relatively low rates of so called ‘Early-Stage Entrepreneurial Activity’ (= individuals who have taken some action towards creating a new business) in nevertheless highly competitive countries as Sweden, Germany, Finland and Denmark. When investigating ‘Established Business Ownership’ (= for those who run a business which pays salaries for already more than 42 months) the GEM survey found out: This indicator is much higher for Finland than it is for Sweden, and much lower for Germany, which ranks just next ahead of Italy (which performs at the same time substantially lower in competitiveness surveys). From these findings one can conclude that entrepreneurial activities if measured as only business start-ups have no direct influence on the general competitiveness of a country. Or to say it in other words: analysing the assumed effect from entrepreneurship on countries’ competitiveness on the basis of start-up rates only might be a misleading approach. Research findings (and for example recommendations for promotional policies in regions) might look very different if the definition of
entrepreneurship is broadened towards entrepreneurial activities beyond starting up new companies.

The GEM survey also asked for motives of entrepreneurs to start their businesses: Did they get into activities because they saw an opportunity (= opportunity-driven) or because they felt forced by necessity (= necessity-driven)? For high income countries the GEM report states: “The highest percentages of opportunity-driven early-stage entrepreneurial activity are found in Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands (all higher than 90%). Germany, France and Greece have much lower shares of opportunity-driven early-stage entrepreneurs at about 60%.” (GEM 2007, 18). As it comes to formal education, the GEM survey concedes that “… the relationship between entrepreneurial activity at all stages is unclear. This is probably due to the fact that entrepreneurial ventures are the response to a variety of circumstances and present a variety of characteristics.” (GEM 2007, 23).

Looking at early-stage entrepreneurial activities in selected BSR countries (cf. GEM 2007) and comparing such rates with indicators like ‘procedures to start a business’ or ‘time to start a business’ (cf. World Bank 2005) we can find that in Finland, Sweden and Denmark it needs less procedures and time to start a business than it needs in Germany, and the rate of so-called ‘early stage entrepreneurial activity’ is lower in Germany than it is in Finland and Denmark, but higher than in Sweden. If one regards such indicators as ‘barriers’ to entrepreneurship, it would be therefore too easy to expect that the reduction of single regulatory barriers might show immediate effects on increases in entrepreneurial activity measured as number of business start-ups. Cultural and psychological foundations of economic activity have been stressed since Max Weber by many researchers, in particular for entrepreneurship (cf. McClelland 1961; Davidsson 1995; Müller, Thomas 2000). For developing entrepreneurship in the BSR it is suggested that policy approaches should start by “… identifying the most important barriers that hold back entrepreneurship in a specific country …” (State of the Region Report 2005, 45). And the GEM states: “… the expanded view of entrepreneurship … confirms that entrepreneurship comes in many forms. Therefore when it comes to entrepreneurial policy, one size does not fit all. Effective policies with respect to entrepreneurship need to be tailored to the local context and depend on what aspect of its entrepreneurial portfolio a country wishes to enhance.” (GEM 2007, 24). Furthermore, if we assume that ‘soft’ human and society-related conditions have at least a strong influence on entrepreneurial activity as regulatory or other ‘hard-framework’ conditions have (if not more!), the educational system and modes of collaboration come to the fore as important fields for change and development towards effective entrepreneurship promotion.

Highlighting finally the need for policies to strengthen the human capital base in the BSR with a focus on competences and attitudes for innovation and entrepreneurship it closes the circle to findings on BSR competitiveness in the section above.

2.3. Conclusions for the Operation BEPART

Table 1 illustrates and explains partly why BEPART stresses the links between entrepreneurship and the educational system, taking into account that improved (to be tailored and different) regional policy concepts are no contradiction to common cross-country approaches where possible.
**Table 1. Project Responses to General Research-based Findings in the BSR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings in the BSR</th>
<th>BEPART approaches</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The BSR is a highly competitive area, but with strong disparities between countries and regions.</td>
<td>The BSR-focus is a driving background for the work in BEPART. A network structure with partners from different regions enables to access disparities, strengths and weaknesses of regions. A major interest of BEPART is learning from differing concepts, successful and ineffective ones as well.</td>
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<td>Entrepreneurship as a creative, value-adding activity is regarded as an engine for competitiveness and growth in the BSR. But the isolated view on the number of business start-ups does not explain much of the countries’ competitiveness. Entrepreneurship is more than business start-ups.</td>
<td>BEPART promotes a broad concept of entrepreneurship, which goes beyond business start-ups.</td>
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<td>Entrepreneurial activity is stronger influenced by human-related, ‘soft’ and ‘slow-to-change’ conditions (such as cultural and social settings, values or identities) than by ‘hard’ and ‘quick-to-change’ regulatory conditions. ‘Soft conditions’ differ the more one moves from an international BSR level down to the level of countries, regions and local milieus.</td>
<td>One focus of BEPART (especially in its first phases) has been to explore and to understand different regional conditions and policies, and different or similar entrepreneurship promotion concepts/experiences as a part of it. Such different ideas and connected values also influence the work and processes inside the network. BEPART regards the respective education systems as key institutions which strongly moderate (positively or negatively) regional conditions and human capital for entrepreneurship activity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>On an aggregate level the BSR has a sound human capital base, but at the same time strong differences in the quality of national education systems.</td>
<td>BEPART activities have a major focus on educational and training approaches for entrepreneurship. Quality issues in developing new concepts are being explicitly considered. BEPART concentrates so far especially on higher education institutions (universities, polytechnics).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human capital and knowledge flows between BSR countries are small, and cross-country, interregional knowledge exchange is limited.</td>
<td>The cross-country and interregional knowledge exchange is supported by different BEPART activities: meetings, workshops, conferences, on-the-spot-visits, cross-regional collaborative work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking towards higher competitiveness (e.g. cluster-development; triple-helix cooperation) is a developing policy-instrument in the BSR.</td>
<td>BEPART activities aim at the involvement of regional actors beyond the respective partner organization (for example in meetings and conferences; follow-up-actions) with the idea to support regional and local network activities within ‘triple-helix-arrangements’ and to prevent that generated knowledge gets unrelated and inert.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In entrepreneurship promotion policies one size cannot fit all.</td>
<td>One major approach in BEPART are regional conferences at the level of each partner, and thereby to bridge international and (to be tailored) regional innovations for entrepreneurship promotion.</td>
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</table>

Nevertheless, the BEPART focus on educational innovations as an approach to strengthening (regional) entrepreneurship is no call for more formal education of
potential entrepreneurs or business starters. More of the wrong would produce the worse.

Research in entrepreneurship education delivers findings that entrepreneurship and the number of start-up activities is not fostered by so-called ‘conventional formal education’ and that entrepreneurial attitudes are even suppressed thereby (cf. Löbler 2006, 21). And entrepreneurship education is not by itself an innovative field in education either, as linear business-plan elaboration and lectures still dominate the scene (cf. ibid). BEPART activities are directed to innovate and enrich conventional education (especially in and by universities and polytechnics) towards a direction and understanding of entrepreneurship, which is expressed in the EU Green Paper on Entrepreneurship: “Entrepreneurship is first and foremost a mindset. It covers an individual’s motivation and capacity, independently or within an organisation, to identify an opportunity and to pursue it in order to produce new value or economic success.” (EU 2003, 5).

3. BEPART Goals, Structure, Work Components

3.1. Goals, Partners and Resources

July 2004 was the official start of the project to be financed until December 2007. The history of the project goes back to the year 2001, with the edition of a book on entrepreneurship in countries of the Baltic Sea Region (Braun, Diensberg 2002).

The overall project objectives of BEPART are directed towards higher efficiency and impact of entrepreneurship promotion at universities and within local/regional networks, and towards contributing to the development of a creative and responsible entrepreneurship culture in the Baltic Sea Region and Europe at large.

Sub-goals of the operation are (BEPART 2004):

- Exchange of experience and information among the partners with regard to (a) the role of entrepreneurship promotion in respective regional development strategies, (b) different types of promotional activities as well as (c) specific measures and methods used in training/qualification with the aim to foster entrepreneurial competences and action at and beyond universities.
- Dissemination of findings and discussion of problems and potentials of the current state of affairs by politicians, representatives of the business communities and trainers/lecturers active in entrepreneurship education within partner institutions and connected regional networks.
- Formation of interregional/national action-learning & reflection groups (ARGs) that will prepare and design (future) new ways to promote entrepreneurial competences, as far as possible decentrally implement identified suitable pilot activities at the local levels and carefully screen the first results.
- Facilitation of high-quality and dynamic joint learning within the ARGs as well as within the network of BEPART at large through self-assessment, observation, feedback and similar tools.

The network partners are:

(1) Jagiellonian University/ CITTRU, Poland
(2) Häme Development Centre Ltd., Finland
(3) Aarhus School of Business & University of Aarhus, Denmark
(4) University of Tampere, Finland  
(5) Kaunas University of Technology, Regional Business Incubator, Lithuania  
(6) University of Tartu, Estonia  
(7) Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia  
(8) University of Oulu, Finland  
(9) Kajaani University of Applied Sciences, Finland  
(10) University of Twente, NIKOS, Netherlands  
(11) Stockholm School of Entrepreneurship, Sweden, and  
(12) as Lead Partner: University of Rostock, Germany.

Thus, the BEPART network “... consists of mostly university-based competence centres or regional focal points of entrepreneurship promotion with strong links to the surrounding business community as well as labour market, economic and education policy makers.” (BEPART 2004).

Figure 1. BEPART Network Partners

The total budget amounts to € 1.87 Mio, of which roughly € 1.2 Mio are contributed by the EU programme Interreg IIIC/ ERDF (European Regional Development Fund). € 670,000 is contributed by the partners or respective member states.
Interreg III C as a main funding source is an EU-funded programme which intends to help Europe’s regions form partnerships to work together on common projects. The programme goals strongly promote sharing knowledge and experience with the idea that these partnerships enable the regions involved to develop new solutions to economic, social and environmental challenges.

3.1. Work Components, Activities and Expected Results

The work of the project is organised according to five work packages, according to the basic programme conditions of Interreg III C.

*Figure 2. Five Work Components of BEPART*

Figure 2 illustrates that finally the impact on regional levels is a major aim of the project (component 3). The outer layers of this ‘sandwich’ have a supportive function: project coordination (component 1) and learning/quality improvements (component 5). Most of the content-related work is being done in the inner layers: research and exchange on regional entrepreneurship promotion and development (component 2), and research and development on improving entrepreneurship education and training (component 4).

With regard to expectations for operations like BEPART it is useful first to clarify some evaluation terminology, which is often applied in public programmes, and to distinct results, outputs and impact (Table 2).

*Table 2. Expected Outputs, Results and Impact*

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<tr>
<th>Category of work expectations</th>
<th>BEPART work expectations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Outputs directly result from activities of the operation. They are typically measured in physical or monetary units such as: number of meetings/seminars/training sessions, number of collaborative projects, number and type of reports/policy tools/written concepts, and many others.</td>
<td>No of international, national and regional conferences, No of workshops, No of reports and publications (e.g. on the role of entrepreneurship promotion in regional development strategies), No of participating regions, 10-12 teaching cases on entrepreneurship development. No of participants in events, and their attributable background to business, university and regional policy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Workshop attendance. Success in involving researchers, trainers/lecturers. Proven exchange of experience and tools (e.g. in entrepreneurship education). Countable innovative approaches in entrepreneurship education/training developed and – as far as possible – tested. No and application of tools for facilitating joint learning in entrepreneurship education (developed, tested, documented). No of reports.

Results are direct and immediate effects brought about by the operations. They provide, for example, information on improvement in capacity/efficiency of partners or enhancement of performance. Broadened and deepened understanding of the linkages btw. regional socio-economic structures, regional development policies, university education & entrepreneurial activities. Increased expertise in entrepreneurship education at universities and beyond. Strengthened European orientation and intensified international cooperation in the field of entrepreneurship promotion. More students being aware of and motivated for entrepreneurial initiative. More researchers and students having access to high quality support for spin-off ventures. Improved access to shared knowledge in the field of entrepreneurship promotion as well as effective methods to foster inter-personnel, inter-organisational and inter-regional learning processes.

Impact refers to the long-term consequences of the operation beyond its immediate interaction with direct beneficiaries. The impact provides information about the achievement of the operations’ global objectives and is the principal basis for assessing the operations’ success or failure. More productive utilisation of scarce human (talents, knowledge) and natural resources, more consistent regional development strategies, more sustainable socio-economic development through strengthened entrepreneurship culture, and improved (regional) innovation potentials and competitiveness.

The above tabled overview exemplifies
- that a distinction between outputs, results and impact is needed to plan and to evaluate such project work;
- that theoretical thought, experience and research are needed as knowledge sources, to be able to build functional, logical chains between outputs, results and expected impact for such projects and programmes;
- that cooperation even beyond the closer project-consortium is needed the more one steps from outputs to results and finally to impact. Outputs for example can be ‘produced’ by merely a few active persons or partners. But to arrive at results will need already support and cooperation beyond the closer boundaries of the project or network. To achieve finally an expected impact it is even more difficult, it will need a strong interaction with related actors and environments, as it means trying to influence and develop complex systems.
One approach in BEPART which aims at improving the interaction with actors beyond the project boundaries is activities to involve others into project work. Admittedly, it would be misleading to call this approach already an explicit, clear cut strategy. It is rather a conceptual inherent idea. From the viewpoint as project coordinator I would nevertheless give the recommendation to other projects to formulate and pass an explicit strategy on expanding interaction with others already during the phase of project planning and at early take-off, and to provide sufficient resources for such activities.

A central activity to improve interaction with others were the First and Second BEPART conferences ‘Towards Entrepreneurial Regions’, in 2005 hosted by Aarhus School of Business University of Aarhus (Denmark), and in 2006 hosted by the University of Tartu (Estonia).

4. BEPART Propositions on Entrepreneurship Promotion and Education – towards Entrepreneurial Regions

The above-mentioned two larger BEPART conferences were attended by more than 200 participants from about 15 countries. Many of the participants have been also active contributors by presenting, leading workshops and sessions, submitting papers. As a first output, these inputs have been fully published (see Diensberg, Dreisler 2006; Mets, Andrijevskaja 2006). The interaction with others before and during the conferences can be regarded as one step towards impact.

A second and follow-up activity has been to synthesise the manifold conference topics and aspects and to break them down to ten statements as an essence. (Referring to the above mentioned categories the process and passage of the statements can be called a result, as their content also resembles an improved and shared knowledge). The BEPART project partners passed these ten statements in December 2006. The present idea in early 2007 is to use them as a tool which makes it easier to interact, for example, on inner-organizational levels of the university-partners, on the academic level with other researchers or with students, on the regional levels with actors from business, administration and politics, and on national and international levels, for example, with decision-takers in the field of entrepreneurship promotion.

Thus, the following statements aim at more successful development of entrepreneurship in regions and universities:

Imagination of Entrepreneurship

1. A broad concept of entrepreneurship is a better ground for effective entrepreneurship promotion than a narrow one.

Worldwide, one will find endless numbers of definitions and concepts of entrepreneurship. Actually entrepreneurship is a various and broad phenomenon of applied creativity, problem-solving, innovation and interaction, beyond business start-ups. It is also a concept for personal growth and learning. If we are to promote business start-ups and to develop entrepreneurship as a whole concept we shall broaden our own imagination of entrepreneurship, demystify the concept, and make it attractive for many.
2. **A region can grow in entrepreneurship if values, structures and activities for entrepreneurship are widely appreciated and supported.**
   Entrepreneurship and innovation start with curiosity and the entrepreneurial spirit of people, prior to business plans, money or office space. Within local and regional environments, values and orientation towards entrepreneurship are fundamentals. Ideas need freedom for initiative, experiment and development, and possibilities to access supportive resources to put them into practice.

3. **An entrepreneurial region calls for the integration of the entrepreneurial focus into many other policy fields beyond the promotion of high-tech innovation and start-ups.**
   Regions are complex ecosystems, and entrepreneurship is a complex phenomenon. In order to facilitate entrepreneurship on a broader regional scale with sustainable effects a systems approach is required. This is considered also in European initiatives like the ‘Lisbon Strategy’, the ‘Green Paper on Entrepreneurship in Europe’ and the corresponding ‘Opinion of the Committee of the Regions’. Still, too many regional policy approaches neglect the complexity by means of using superficial, short-term or isolated concepts. The entrepreneurship rationale demands a holistic approach.

4. **A starting point towards entrepreneurial regions is the development of learning, education and culture for entrepreneurship.**
   An educational system is a mirror of dominant values of a certain region and society. If entrepreneurship shall be important for a region, education is therefore a vital starting point. The regional promotion of entrepreneurial spirit and competence within education is a grass-root approach to promote the entrepreneurial learning of individuals, social settings and organizations.

**Entrepreneurship Education and Training**

5. **Entrepreneurship education shall be based on a concept for personal growth.**
   Entrepreneurship is interaction and does not exist in a vacuum. As an entrepreneur one would integrate others’ expectations and outside developments into one’s own ideas and activities. Thus, reflection and interaction are core dimensions of entrepreneurial competence. Learning which aims at improving reflection and interaction contributes to personal growth. If we base entrepreneurship training and education on the learning goal of personal growth we enable entrepreneurship pedagogy, and can support entrepreneurial activity.

6. **Methods in entrepreneurship education need to support initiative and creativity, the acquisition of structured experience within learning, and provide laboratory conditions.**
   Entrepreneurship education and training must incorporate methods which support experiments, creativity, alertness, critical thinking, interaction and similar activity. Teaching methods should turn away from traditional lecture-style teaching. Entrepreneurial teaching and learning methods already imply entrepreneurial competence and talent which one aims to strengthen. We call this ‘action learning approach’.
7. The development of curricula for entrepreneurship goes beyond business studies.
Entrepreneurship addresses competences which can be utilised in all fields of work and life. Curricula should not be limited to business studies. They shall provide the opportunity to develop projects, business models or related sustainable concepts to be exposed, tested and developed on markets or under similar conditions of competition.

8. Entrepreneurship education and promotion will be more successful if facilitators and teachers can make use of adequate training programmes (Training of Trainers).
Opportunities to professionalize will have a positive impact on entrepreneurship training and promotion. Training of trainers (ToT) can offer such opportunity for teachers, lecturers, consultants, incubator managers and even advanced students. It should be also open for entrepreneurship promoters in politics and administration. The BEPART approach is the development of an international ToT programme based on a broad concept of entrepreneurship and on an ‘action learning approach’. Its aims are to learn from and with each other, as well as to support international exchange and dialogue in the field of entrepreneurship education and promotion.

Towards the Entrepreneurial University

9. Universities as catalyst for entrepreneurship need to develop and embrace their own concepts of entrepreneurship.
An entrepreneurial university aims at being competitive in its academic and service fields, and encourages entrepreneurship initiative and competence building throughout research and teaching. An entrepreneurial university creates space and conditions for the unknown, and links teaching to research. From the BEPART perspective commitment to regional entrepreneurship promotion and its regional impact belongs to the concept of entrepreneurial universities. Part of the concept is activities towards building regional innovation systems together with business and government.

Intensifying Triple Helix Interaction

10. In order to build regional systems for entrepreneurship and innovation we need to learn new modes of triple helix interaction of university – business – government.
Organizing regional systems and environments for dynamic entrepreneurship and innovation is a knowledge-intensive and complex challenge. The so-called “triple helix” model addresses interaction between university, business and government. The model recognizes that universities and academia can and shall play an important role in regional innovation processes. It emphasizes the need for a collaborative and hybrid modus of cooperation, and concedes that control cannot be stable and synchronized beforehand but is dynamic by nature. BEPART regards this as a learning process which can only progress by cooperative work towards building such systems.
5. Turning Interregional Experience Exchange into Regional and Local Application – How to Evaluate?

Exchange of experience and knowledge is a major activity within the project, and one aim of the co-financing programme Interreg III C is to enable such exchange on an interregional, cross-boarder level. But does such exchange really lead to changes in local practices and does it change applications on the spot of partners?

Such a question is difficult to answer. To make nevertheless an attempt and to make more explicit what knowledge exchange means for us, we used one meeting for an evaluative survey inside the project. This short round-table survey took place during a project meeting of work component 4, hosted by the University of Twente, 26 February 2006. The background and situation was an earlier systematic, written survey to generate an ‘Inventory of Tools/Curricula at BEPARTners’ in advance of the meeting. The meeting topic of presenting the inventory results was followed by a plenum discussion and self-evaluation on how to use them on the level of partners. The posed question was:

“What are your intentions and plans on using the results of this survey in your region/ in your institution? How to make use of them?”

Answers were taken as notes by the workshop moderators. After the meeting these notes were sent back to the participants with the request to make corrections if needed. The final answers are documented in Table 3.

Table 3. Replies in an Internal BEPART Evaluation on the Use of Experience Exchange

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Partner</th>
<th>Documentation of the given statement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>XX (Rostock)</td>
<td>to improve our entrepreneurship educ. / training at our institute =&gt; useful background info, collection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>will make selective use of it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XX (Oulu)</td>
<td>will inform our teachers/ discuss with them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>will use it for a regional seminar to be done together with partner in Kajaani.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>will influence development of courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>helps to find better practices; supports to choose for certain on-the-spot-visits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XX (Krakow)</td>
<td>it’s a collection of ideas and info, helpful for courses &amp; curricula development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>helps to get in touch with other partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>helps what kind of topics we could develop/ include into courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>interesting to know what is being done in other European universities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XX (Twente)</td>
<td>(Remark: I will make a provoking statement. The socially more desirable one will be delivered from my colleague).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will/ can only use such results if they include the philosophy/ paradigm (esp. of entrepreneurship, teaching), otherwise they are figures of not much use to me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| XX (Häme) | - principally I do not use what I did not invent by myself.  
- we have to combine the results, see them as a whole picture, use them together.  
- we will use them for the development process of our common TOT and main targets of the project. |
| XX (Lodz) | - for a better understanding what is going on in BEPART.  
- comparison can help us to better understand the differences in pedagogical and didactical processes and positions – which is necessary to cooperate within BEPART project (esp. for Training of Trainer-Programme).  
- it is important for didactical/ pedagogical activities to compare own courses with other courses/ to get inspirations.  
- entrepreneurship is about change and development. |
| XX (Aarhus) | - use it for our international Master Programme for Entrepreneurship Training.  
- Catching ideas for this purpose. |
| XX (Häme) | - don’t know exactly, but: lots of courses found; all are different. Might be useful to form groups to look into what is general.  
- good classifications might be found for alternative training solutions and points of view; can be used for own curriculum development.  
- e.g. the aspect of knowledge protection: useful for me. |
| XX (Aarhus) | - as it’s the first time that s.b. accompanies me from Aarhus: to connect own steps/ ideas with those of others.  
- to be used for ToT-approaches.  
- we are still missing a lot of possibilities to use results.  
- to change universities into entrepreneurial universities.  
- twofold use: (1) practical, e.g. ToT; (2) scientific/ research.  
- I am actually talking of using our data to some results. I am very satisfied with the way the project in running now. Especially: the last survey was excellent and the analysis could be taken far further. |
| XX (Tallinn) | - interesting to know what others are doing: to get knowledge on this.  
- hope that we can use ideas to improve own courses.  
- may be that we understand the terms differently: possibility to improve the questionnaire for future research.  
- may be/ suggestion: to form groups with the idea to improve the questionnaire, and take the chance to make papers out of it, for conferences.  
- a proposal to form groups with the idea to analyse the results of surveys (done already and forthcoming surveys) and cooperate in writing papers for dissemination of BEPART results at the conferences. |
| XX (Tallinn) | - as we don’t have the ECTS System yet: possibility to learn from this process.  
- use results for the development of our own curriculum. |
| XX (Tartu) | - use it for our course ‘Master in Entrepreneurship & Technology Management’, to teach students for entrepreneurship.  
- gives insights in the differences in entrepreneurship pedagogy.  
- can be useful in the development of the TOT programme. |
| XX (Kajaani) | - in Kajaani: use for practical ways/ steps.  
- for the ToT (Training of Trainers).  
- regard it as benchmarking; chance for knowledge transfer.  
- I will look where there are some lines, innovation lines to be
used; possibly to change courses then;
- results being used at a seminar on entrepreneurship education together with Oulu; and for the Rostock Symposium.

| XX (Tampere) | I am new. Can’t comment at this stage. |
| XX (Tampere) | what bothers me is that we do a lot of work but don’t make proper research designs.  
- for me this is above all as a learning process. I am learning about partners and approaches.  
- we see that we need more valid information.  
- we should get a more longitudinal overview.  
- how to make more valid information out of it? |
| XX (Tartu) | the survey confirms: we have the right direction.  
- helps our project in entrepreneurship education & training  
- helps also training of our school teachers;  
- knowledge transfer/ ideas from partners, e.g. Oulu, Tampere, Rostock, Twente (selected aspects).  
- helps to know the partners better |
| XX (Rostock) | regard it as a learning process; shows how difficult valid information can be obtained; learn for future surveys/ studies.  
- useful for designing a ToT.  
- will use it to select on-the-spot visits.  
- to use it for internationalizing our training. |
| XX (Twente) | how to make it more valid in future studies?  
- to be used for final report of BEPART;  
- for ToT, Socrates, Rostock-Symposium as an input if we discover useful aspects in the analysis;  
- curiosity. |

### 6. Innovations Needs in Entrepreneurship Education and Developing a Training of Trainer-Programme in BEPART

The number of research publications on entrepreneurship education is immense. Many of them call not only for innovation needs in training and education practices but for a total rethinking of their assumptions as ‘double-loop and deuteron learning’ (to use a term coined by Argyris, Schön 1978). Gibb (2005) for example contrasts foundations of business education and entrepreneurship education, and concludes: “It will (…) demand considerable changes in pedagogy and the appropriate training of staff” (ibid, 4).

Such arguments are rooted finally in a concept of entrepreneurship for which it is difficult to define clear-cut learning goals (there is no job-description as, for example, in vocational education) of what one should exactly know before passing an exam to verify knowledge or fit to expectations. There are cases enough of successful entrepreneurs which confirm the saying ‘Fortune favours fools’, whereas other examples of successful entrepreneurs just confirm the opposite: high expertise, smartness, deliberate risk-awareness, high business competence and knowledge.

How to support entrepreneurial mindsets and competence by training and education?
To find an answer we may simply turn away from entrepreneurship and focus generally on learning and teaching styles instead. So-called ‘conventional methods’ such as lecturing and presentations tend to treat learners as trivial machines. But actually human beings are complex systems with their own inherent dynamics (visualized in Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Contrasting Trivial Machines and Complex Systems**

Inputs may stimulate, but can’t determine the output, as this is done by the system itself. One can give the identical input into two of them but will get an output which will be different and not exactly to predict. Two different learners may both write excellent exams in accounting, but only one of them may succeed in practical application. Or it may be that even none of them is able to transfer the knowledge into entrepreneurial activities. Alternatively it may happen that the one who failed in the exam becomes a successful entrepreneur later on, because for some reasons he shows an excellent gut-feeling even in accounting.

Such a statement on the complexity and constructivist nature of mental and cognitive processes of human beings is a general one, not narrowed to entrepreneurship. It is then relevant for all learning and teaching.

Such findings (which are not new from the viewpoint of psychology, learning-psychology and pedagogy) on entrepreneurship allow to develop a model as shown in Figure 4.

The centre of it represents the mental model of the (potential) entrepreneur with his perceptions and interpretations of himself and of the world around. No job description can force the entrepreneur. The model assigns influential factors to deal (= act, interpret, perceive) with a certain situation to three areas: (1) the person (experience, socialization, education etc.) (2) the business idea and plan, and (3) the environment. Basically, the relations are two-way, as the entrepreneur influences with mental models and ‘real’ actions also such factors. He can do that partly by mental modelling (then his perception of himself, the plan and of the environment may change), and by more explicit actions which change factors of these areas in a way that can be observed also by others.

The figure also assumes that for entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial success it will finally be important what the entrepreneur does: mental actions/action strategies and those ones which are more perceivable also for others from outside. From the viewpoint of the entrepreneur, success depends on objective and subjective factors, which leads finally back to the mental model again, to the entrepreneur as a person.
To transfer such a model into learning and teaching means to place the individual learners as potential entrepreneurs into the centre of education and training activities. Such a new model challenges conventional learning and teaching styles and habits (Table 4).

This new learning has some foundations in so-called ‘constructivist approaches,’ which assume: “Learning is a complex and self-organized activity, oriented towards acting successfully. Within learning we do construct our own reality in a way that it becomes ‘viable’ for us.” (Siebert 1998, 37; original German quotation translated here, C.D.).

The development of an international ‘Training of Trainer’ concept (ToT) in BEPART is one attempt to respond to such innovation needs, and to support impact of entrepreneurship education and training on a broader scale.
Table 4. Comparison of Reproductive and Constructivist Approaches to Learning and Teaching (Source: Braun/Diensberg 2001, 123; based on Siebert 1998, 67)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>reproductive</td>
<td>receive knowledge on entrepreneurship by experts</td>
<td>to impart knowledge on entrepreneurship to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>constructivist</td>
<td>to develop entrepreneurial ways of understanding, of perceiving, of knowing and acting within action and experience</td>
<td>to facilitate and support the development of existing repertoires in knowledge, competences and cognition structures of the learners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The foundations and methods of this ToT will consider and incorporate pedagogical challenges as outlined above, and the basic framework will address four competence fields for the target group of trainers, educators and consultants. Selected course modules will address four competence fields (see Figure 5). By early 2007 this development process goes into the final phase. It is planned to offer first modules on a trial basis already up from summer 2007.

Figure 5. Draft of the Planned BEPART Training of Trainer (ToT) for Entrepreneurship
7. Conclusions and Outlook

Basic clarifications of the concept and nature of entrepreneurship are indispensable for entrepreneurship promotion. If we aim at improving the conditions for wealth and competitiveness by promoting entrepreneurship, we shall conceptualise rather a broad than a narrow concept of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is more than business start-ups, and turns out to be a human-related category in its fullest sense rather than a mere economic one. Serious entrepreneurship promotion demands to turn to human beings, their intentions, their minds, their mindsets.

The case of BEPART as an international university-based network exemplifies one way to put this idea of entrepreneurship promotion into practice. It has been shown that the view on regional situations and research findings is one valuable source to receive ideas and inspirations for such an undertaking. Basic BEPART approaches respond to regional challenges. Also the issue of arriving at impact finally refers to regional conditions. International comparisons of competitiveness prove the influence of the educational systems for competitiveness. Education and training are a promising starting point for entrepreneurship promotion.

For a project like BEPART it is important to distinguish between outputs, results and impact, and different knowledge sources are needed and useful to build logical relations between them. Research findings on entrepreneurship, on regional development and on pedagogy were exemplified as major knowledge sources for this case. Experience exchange between different actors was shown as another important knowledge source to step forward within the project. One example to evaluate if such exchange also leads to changes in activity of the involved actors on their spots has been presented. The evaluation findings indicated how different and individual such intentions and possibilities can be in a network project. The ten BEPART propositions for regional entrepreneurship promotion are on the other hand an example for shared basic assumptions between such different actors from different regions and nations – and can possibly give further guidance for more effective entrepreneurship even on an interregional and European level.

The final thoughts turned back to the issue of entrepreneurship education and conclude: Entrepreneurship education will only improve if teaching and training assumptions and methods are subject of innovation at the same time. As a key challenge they will have to find answers on the question how to accept the learners and potential entrepreneurs as self-organizing, complex systems instead of treating them as trivial machines.

With an implicit message the article appeals to an interaction of triple-helix actors in the field of entrepreneurship promotion and education.

References


IMD 2006. *IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook*, IMD (Institute for Management Development), Lausanne.


