

# BUSINESSMED

Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises



**Skills & Education for  
Successful women and  
youth entrepreneurship in  
the Euro-Mediterranean  
Countries**

2023



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entrepreneurship in the Euro-Mediterranean  
Countries**

## **About BUSINESSMED:**

BUSINESSMED is the main regional representative of the Private Sector that reflects the interest of 25 Confederations of Enterprises from States members of the Union for the Mediterranean - UfM.

Since its creation in 2002, BUSINESSMED (Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises) is a privileged platform for multilateral cooperation for the benefit of 23 the employers' confederations and more than 1'200'000 public and private affiliated companies by promoting foreign direct investments and socio-economic integration in the region.

As one of the main Business support organizations dedicated to multilateral cooperation in the Mediterranean, BUSINESSMED'S mission is to enhance exchanges and strengthen the Mediterranean business ecosystem by reinforcing regional cooperation, social dialogue, and policymaking.

In collaboration with our Members and Partners, our vision of the Mediterranean is one where

- The business ecosystem across the two shores flourish via strong partnerships, and establishment of regional value chains

- Economic development is accompanied by a strong and inclusive social dialogue where different social partners collectively shape

the business ecosystem of the Mediterranean Countries

- Mediterranean Partners collectively and comprehensively address upcoming challenges of the region, building on each other strength to establish a balanced and flourishing business ecosystem



## **BACKGROUND & CONTEXT:**

In line with Article 9.3. of BUSINESSMED Statutes and to create an environment favorable to Mediterranean growth, promote full North/South and South/South economic integration and implement efficient partnership networks, BUSINESSMED will establish four Thematic Committee (TC) focusing on: Digitalization, Internationalization for SMEs, the Green Deal and Women and Youth Entrepreneurs.

The Committees will focus on the qualitative improvement of the four main themes at Euro-Mediterranean level. The Committees aim to study current trends and status among Employers federations and identify best practices and recommendations for the private sector and institutional partners, with the final goal to boost the Euro – Mediterranean business ecosystem and help Employers Federation to better service their members.

The creation of an Employer Committee on Women and Young Entrepreneurs is in strategic continuity with the work and output of the first Thematic Committee on Women Empowerment and Gender Mainstreaming. The published industry outlook highlighted the current situation for women within high level position within the private and public sector within the MENA region. The study showcased that despite current trends highlighting the importance for successful businesses to include women within their boards, the current representation for women remains still low.

Equal opportunities within leadership positions remain low within the Mediterranean Countries, highlighting the importance of keeping Gender mainstreaming high on the EuroMed Agenda. This is especially important when we look at the world of Entrepreneurs.

Women face significant barriers when establishing their businesses, among other access to finance, business networks, etc. Nevertheless, women are not the only player that need tailored made support, the young and fast increasing population of the Mediterranean also is set to be a key player for the economic development of Mediterranean Countries. Currently, in the aftermath of the

COVID 19 pandemic and its subsequent disruption of value chains and economic growth, the private sector and entrepreneurship have a key role to play to boost the Mediterranean business ecosystem.

BUSINESSMED activities in this field converge with already important activities from key players. The “MENA Women Business Club” joint initiative by the Union for Mediterranean and UNIDO is a step in this direction. The initiative promotes the creation of financing opportunities and establishment of women business networks. Similarly, the European Union with its strategy on Gender Equality (2020-2025) also strives to establish a gender-equal Europe via the use of gender mainstreaming and target actions to reduce gender-based violence, closing gender gaps within labor market, and equal participation within the different economic sectors, etc. The efforts at EU level are also mirrored in EU’s programming activities for the southern neighborhood and Africa. As shown in its communication “Renewed Partnership for the Southern Neighborhood” where the establishment of Inclusive economies via the creation of prospects for young people and the increased economic empowerment of women are listed as key socio-economic reforms and investment initiatives.

The Thematic Committee on Women and Young Entrepreneurs inscribes itself within these efforts at EuroMed level and aims to provide research and data on the entrepreneurial ecosystem to develop joint positions and recommendations among Mediterranean Employers Federations.

## **About this report:**

This report has been developed by the Thematic Committee on Women and Young Entrepreneurs, after conducting extensive research in the Mediterranean region with the aim of defining which key skills are needed to succeed as a young entrepreneur, maintaining a gender perspective. Through the conducted research, a set of recommendations and best practices have been identified to strengthen the relation between education, training, employers’ organizations and entrepreneurship, with the aim of ensuring a better preparation of future generations to access the Mediterranean labor market more swiftly.

## ***COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE:***

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- ◆ **Odeh Shehade, Secretary General**, Palestinian Federation of Industries, PFI – Palestine
- ◆ **Shaimaa Bahaa El Din**, Director of International Relations and Development – Federation of Egyptian Industries – FEI
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**Dr. Imane El Ouizgani** is an associate professor, researcher, and an international expert in the fields of human resource management (HRM), gender, and youth & women's economic inclusion through employment and entrepreneurship. She works with national and international organizations in various projects related to employment and youth & women employability and has a thorough knowledge of the actors and structures related to this subject matter.



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***Key words:***

Youth entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship skills,  
Euro-Mediterranean region, entrepreneurship  
education & training

## List of abbreviations

<b>CB</b>	Capacity Building
<b>EE</b>	Entrepreneurship Education
<b>EET</b>	Entrepreneurship Education and Training
<b>ES</b>	Education System
<b>ET</b>	Entrepreneurship Training
<b>EUROMED</b>	Euro-Mediterranean countries or region
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>MEA</b>	Malta Employers' Association
<b>MENA</b>	Middle East and North Africa
<b>NEET</b>	Not in Education, Employment or Training
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>RVE</b>	Radicalization and Violent Extremism
<b>SMEs</b>	Small and medium-sized enterprises
<b>TC</b>	Thematic Committee on women and young entrepreneurs

## List of figures

<b>Figure 1</b>	Latest youth unemployment rates in the target countries of our study
<b>Figure 2</b>	Startups survival rates in the EU countries (2019)
<b>Figure 3</b>	The EntreComp wheel
<b>Figure 4</b>	Classifying Entrepreneurship Education and Training Programs
<b>Figure 5</b>	Research methodology
<b>Figure 6</b>	Key challenges of youth entrepreneurship in the EUROMED region
<b>Figure 7</b>	General solutions to empower young entrepreneurs in the EUROMED region
<b>Figure 8</b>	Importance of EntreComp's entrepreneurship skills in the EUROMED region
<b>Figure 9</b>	Difference of importance of EntreComp's entrepreneurship skills between north and south Mediterranean respondents
<b>Figure 10</b>	Duration of EET and its impact
<b>Figure 11</b>	Importance in EET of the top 5 skills that are mentioned as important for entrepreneurial success for northern young entrepreneurs
<b>Figure 12</b>	Importance in EET of the top 5 skills that are mentioned as important for entrepreneurial success for southern young entrepreneurs

## List of tables

<b>Table 1</b>	Tools used in this research
<b>Table 2</b>	Specific challenges faced by male and female young entrepreneurs in the north/south Mediterranean countries
<b>Table 3</b>	Specific skills needed to succeed for male and female young entrepreneurs in the north/south Mediterranean countries

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>I - Overview of youth entrepreneurship in the EUROMED region ...</b>	<b>12</b>
1. Youngsters' economic inclusion in the EUROMED region .....	13
2. Entrepreneurship and unemployment .....	16
3. Success factors and challenges facing EUROMED's young entrepreneurs .....	17
4. Entrepreneurship skills and entrepreneurial education in service of youth employability.....	20
<b>II- Skills and education for successful entrepreneurship in the EUROMED countries: results of our field study .....</b>	<b>27</b>
1. Methodology .....	28
2. Skills and education for successful entrepreneurship in the EUROMED countries	30
3. Recommendations.....	38
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>43</b>

## *Introduction*

This research is part of the work of the Employers thematic committee on women and young entrepreneurs. It is an effort aiming to provide research and data on the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the Euro-Mediterranean region in order to develop recommendations and policy advice for the Mediterranean Employers Federations in general, and those based in eight Euro-Mediterranean partner countries in particular: Algeria, Egypt, Palestine, Tunisia, Malta, Italy, Syria and Turkey.

In fact, since entrepreneurship is promoted by government policies and international agencies as a solution to high rates of youth unemployment (Gould Krafft & Rizk, 2018), this study's main objective is to answer this research question: **“What are the key skills needed to succeed as a young entrepreneur?”**. The goal is to investigate the key skills, competencies and, more generally, factors needed for young entrepreneurs to be successful in the EUROMED region. It also aims to identify actual and potential contribution of the entrepreneurship education and training systems to the development of entrepreneurship. This will help provide recommendations to strengthen the relations between education, training, and entrepreneurship, leading to a better preparation of future generations to access the labor market more swiftly.

The results of the present research will serve our analysis of the difference between the labor market's need and the EET system's offer. It will lead then to identifying strengths of the current EET programs and potential improvements to undertake. This will help us draw clearer picture of the current state of youth entrepreneurship and, most importantly, propose feasible appropriate recommendations to be implemented. Furthermore, the different outcomes of the study (literature review, survey, and focus group discussion) will all be cross-referenced throughout the report. In fact, the results will be segregated and analyzed by country & sex, a further analysis will be conducted to compare the main findings between the two regions investigated. The research results will eventually be shared with stakeholders from business associations and employers' confederations, private sector actors, entrepreneurship specialists, EET graduates and entrepreneurship policy makers.



**1 - Overview of youth entrepreneurship in the EUROMED region**





# 1. Youngsters' economic inclusion in the EUROMED region

To start with, there is no universal consensus on what “youth” is. Youth is socially constructed and refers to the period of complex transitions to autonomy, from childhood to adulthood. Definitions of young people vary between countries. The age range 15-29 is often selected for statistical purposes at EU level (Council of Europe & European Commission, 2019)<sup>1</sup>. From the above, and for the purposes of our study, we suggest adopting the EU age interval (18-35) since we are covering entrepreneurship starting from the skills development phase in university.

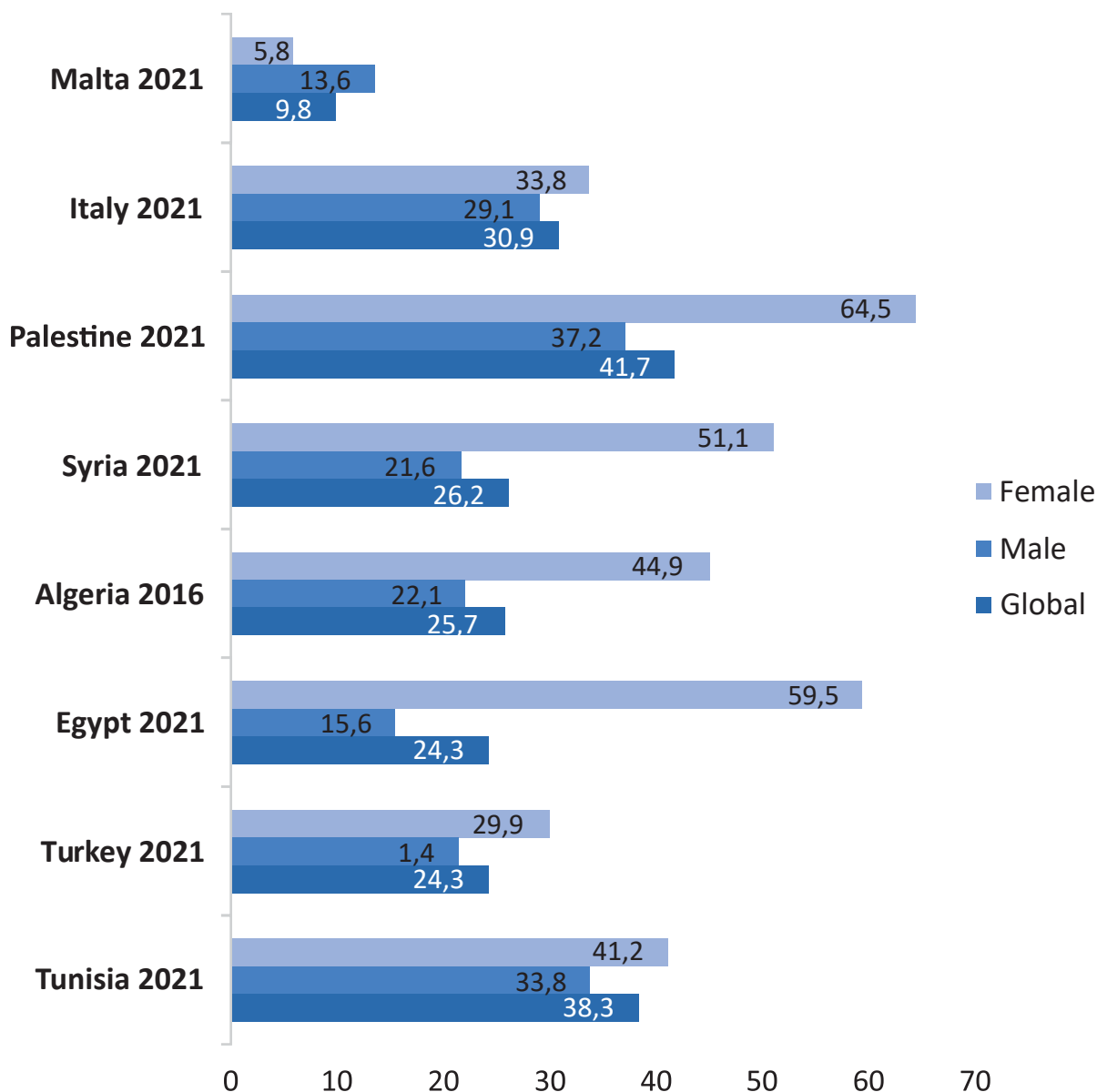
Now going back to our subject of interest, the difficulty that youth have in finding work is reflected in their high rates of unemployment. It is a well-known fact that youth unemployment rates are alarmingly high in all the EU's Mediterranean countries (Eichhorst & Nedder, 2014). Suleiman (2022) stresses that youth unemployment in the south of the Mediterranean is the highest globally, compared to other regions, by a wide margin. He shows that the combined youth unemployment rate for the ten Southern Mediterranean countries in 2019 was 26.1% compared to 19.6% for the second highest region, South Asia, and a world average of 15.3% (Suleiman, 2022). Furthermore, youth unemployment is considered a chronic problem in the region since the latter has persistently witnessed the highest unemployment rates globally for at least the last three decades. The situation is even worse nowadays in the aftermath of the covid-19 pandemic:



<sup>1</sup> A partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth published a report (Perovic, 2016) in which they tried to gather countries with similar attitude in the EU region, thus reaching six groups of current solutions namely age definitions, presented below:

- 14/15/16 and 29/30 years — predominant European model followed by: Andorra, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Denmark, Georgia, Italy, Lithuania, Hungary, Moldova, Germany, Poland, Russia, Slovenia, Serbia, Turkey, Croatia, Montenegro, Czech Republic and Spain.
- 13/15/16 and 24/25 years — shortened youth age model followed by: Ireland, Latvia, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Switzerland and Sweden.
- 12/13 and 30 years — start earlier and end later youth age model followed by: United Kingdom, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway and Portugal.
- 12/14/15/16 and 32/35 years — prolonged youth age model followed by: Greece, Cyprus, Romania, San Marino and Ukraine.
- 3/6/7 and 25/26/30 years — youth age model comprising also childhood age followed by: France, Estonia and Iceland; and
- 0 and 25/29/30 years — children and youth merging model followed by: Austria, Belgium, Liechtenstein, Slovak Republic, Finland and the Netherlands.

**Figure 1: Latest youth unemployment rates in the target countries of our study**



**Source:** World Bank Database<sup>2</sup> and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics<sup>3</sup>

Malta has the lowest youth unemployment rates, especially for women, and it dropped even more to a record low of 2.93% in the second trimester of 2022. On the contrary, during and after the current economic and health crisis, we can see that youth unemployment is alarmingly high in many of the studied countries, especially for young women. By the end of 2021, the female youth unemployment rate was above 50% in Palestine, Egypt and Syria (see previous figure). The gender differences in unemployment rates are large in most countries. The largest gender unemployment gaps are found in Egypt, Algeria and Palestine, while only in Malta the male youth unemployment rate is higher than the female.

<sup>2</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SU.UEM.1524.ZS>. Last check: 14/12/2022

<sup>3</sup> Palestinian Labor Force Survey Annual Report 2021, link <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2605.pdf>. Last check: 17/08/2022

In fact, the domestic labor markets fail to create sufficient employment opportunities, particularly for youngsters, women and among those graduates, causing persistently high unemployment rates. Many causes, besides the covid 19 crisis, can lead to this situation: skill mismatches, rigid regulations and the limits of deregulation, the weight of the public sector and its influence of educational choices, as well as issues related to the persistence of certain socio-cultural norms. Also, young women often experience greater difficulty accessing the labor market than young men due to gaps in educational attainment as well as cultural and social factors (European Union, 2018c).

Implications of youth unemployment high rates are problematic for any age group, since unutilized human capital impacts both unemployed individuals and the economy at large. However, unemployment of the youth and new entrants to the labor market might be even more problematic as it could have longer-lasting implications on

the individual's life, and far more widespread economic, political, social and security consequences in any country or region. The consequences include discouragement of the unemployed and related high rates of NEET across the region and increasing migratory flows fueled by youngsters lacking a perspective in their home countries and searching for opportunities in host countries (Ayadi et al., 2017).

In his research about youth unemployment in the southern Mediterranean countries, Suleiman (2022) suggests many other outcomes. One direct and straightforward impact is the direct loss of income during the unemployment spell itself and, empirical evidence shows that income loss due to a spell of unemployment at a young age could extend for several years, even long after the individual has been employed. In fact, it is estimated that one year of early unemployment could have a long-lasting "wage scar", which means that an individual who suffered from such a spell of unemployment in their youth might earn less than an individual who did not, even decades later. This scar generally stems from the individual accumulating less job experience and firm-specific skills early on, and even suffering from potential repeated incidence of unemployment later in their career (Gregg et al., 2005). Unemployment of more than six months is found to have direct short-term consequences on the health of young people, which include developing harmful habits, such as smoking and alcohol consumption, in addition to suffering psychological illness, with symptoms including anxiety, lack of concentration, restlessness, depression, and sleeping disorders. Furthermore, several of these health problems are found to persist in the long term into adulthood and many health problems can be directly attributed to that early unemployment period. In addition, it has been empirically





proven that a highly significant consequence of youth unemployment is political and social instability, which in turn discourages private investment and slows economic growth. Furthermore, empirical data from various societies, mostly in developed countries, proves that youth unemployment among males is the main cause of crime in a given society. Besides crime, youth unemployment is also a proven driver of radicalization and violent extremism (RVE). Spillovers of youth unemployment extend beyond individual countries that suffer from such a phenomenon, and into their regional neighbors, mainly through increasing irregular migration. In fact, there is strong evidence that youth unemployment is a significant driver of irregular migration for youth in the south of the Mediterranean, and the broader MENA region, and elsewhere in the world, who search for better opportunities away from their home countries.

As for women specifically, low employment rates of young females during their transition to the labor market could also lead to higher fertility rates and population growth, as evident in the region in the last few decades (Vanore, 2020). Higher fertility rates could be problematic in already fast-growing populations, as in south Mediterranean countries, especially with their limited natural resources, mainly water and arable land.

With these limits in mind, the main challenge for all employability stakeholders is to improve youngsters' economic inclusion in order to achieve a better match between the labor market's supply and demand.

## 2. *Entrepreneurship and unemployment*

The concept of entrepreneurship is usually associated with innovation, creating value, uniqueness, and growth. Definitions of entrepreneurship typically center around individuals (entrepreneurs) exploiting opportunities they observe in the market to create a new product or firm (Gould Krafft & Rizk, 2018). OECD defines entrepreneurship as the ability to use the existing resources and exploit new opportunities. The organization recognizes its crucial role in the economic growth and highlights its multidimensional character (OECD, 1998).

Entrepreneurship is commonly mentioned to describe the formation and development of new small enterprises<sup>4</sup> or to denote a specific business attitude characterized by the ability to take risks and foster innovation. A number of theories of entrepreneurship emerged, stressing different dimensions of this notion. The dimension of creation of opportunity explains why entrepreneurship is considered to have great potential in MENA, and in developing countries generally (Gould Krafft & Rizk, 2018). There is a growing interest in the role that entrepreneurship can play as a catalyst to achieve economic and social development objectives, including growth, innovation, employment, and equity. In Benzing et al., (2009)'s words, it has been widely agreed that there is a positive correlation between economic

<sup>4</sup> Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are often referred to as the backbone of the EUROMED economy, providing a potential source for jobs and economic growth. SMEs are defined by the European Commission as having less than 250 persons employed (Eurostat, 2022).

growth and entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship can manifest within an economy in a number of ways, and it includes both formal and informal economic activities for the purposes of creating wealth. In turn, entrepreneurship can contribute to economic development through high-growth enterprises or, through enterprises that can serve as an important source of income and employment for vulnerable populations (Valerio et al., 2014). In fact, when youth start businesses, they can not only alleviate their own unemployment but also create jobs for others. The job-creation potential of entrepreneurship has led governments and international agencies to prioritize entrepreneurship as a solution to unemployment in the region (Gould Krafft & Rizk, 2018). That is one of the reasons for high hopes for the role of entrepreneurship is related to creating jobs or value, which it makes it the solution to youth unemployment and a key engine of economic development.

Youth entrepreneurship is one way to address these difficulties facing young people on the labor market by enabling young people to establish their own enterprises and providing additional jobs for their employees, who are often also young people (European Union, 2018c). This entrepreneurial activity can also have a social purpose, creating hope for the future and counteracting the development of social unrest and RVE, mentioned earlier in this report. Also, by creating income-earning opportunities it has the potential to contribute to local economic growth, job creation, innovation and reduce migratory pressures that result from uncertain economic prospects and relatively low incomes in the home countries. Starting up businesses can assist young people in developing practical skills that have not been taught at school, including independence, confidence, problem solving, teamwork and leadership skills. Successful young entrepreneurs can

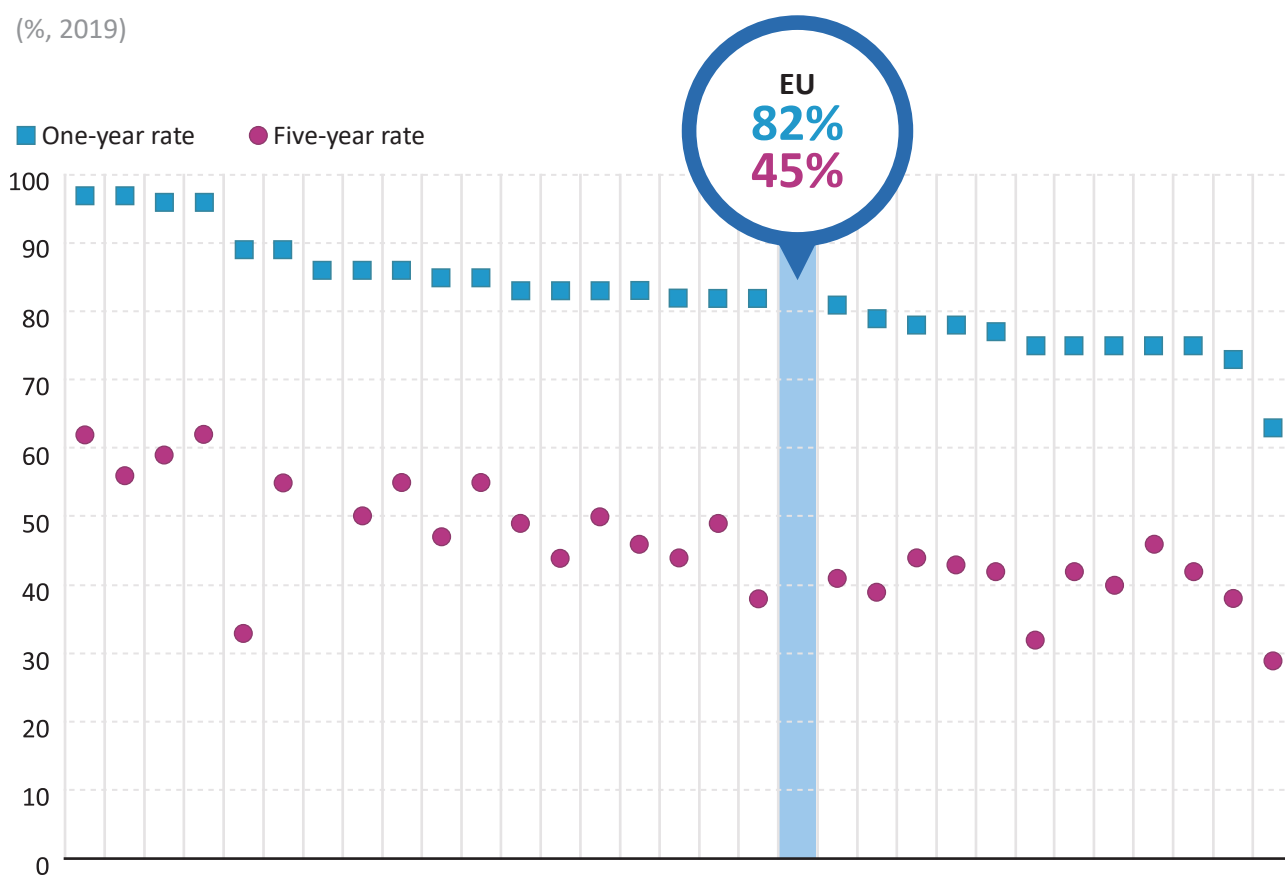
have a wider impact on their local community, acting as role models for disenchanted youth and providing jobs and skills to those that they employ in their businesses. Youth entrepreneurship may also be a particularly attractive option for young women who often face discrimination on the formal labor market (European Union, 2018c).

### **3. Success factors and challenges facing EUROMED's young entrepreneurs**

#### **3.1 Obstacles hindering youth entrepreneurship:**

Enterprise deaths means the permanent closure of an enterprise, it is one of the signs of a struggling economy and implies that startups face difficult challenges to overcome in order to survive the 5 years threshold. Observing the post-entry performance of companies is as important as analyzing their birth rate. The survival rate of enterprises provides information on the share of businesses surviving one or more years after birth and allows to investigate questions such as how long do start-ups survive after creation and the differences in survival rates of enterprises across countries and industries (OECD, 2012). Eurostat (2022) stresses that in 2018, more than four out of every five enterprises born in the previous year in the EU-27's business economy had survived their first year, making the one-year survival rate was 81 %. Also, the five-year survival rate for enterprises born in 2013 and still active in 2018 was 45 %; in other words, less than half of all newly born enterprises from the 2013 cohort survived until 2018. Five-year enterprise survival rates were less than 50 % for most of the EU Member States:

**Figure 2: Startups survival rates in the EU countries (2019)**



**Source:** Eurostat (2022), page 16

The survival rates differ significantly from region to region. Also, exceptional events might highly influence them, like the recent world pandemic. In this part of the report, we’re going to dive deeper in the different challenges faced by startups in their early stages.

The problems facing entrepreneurs in developing countries are often quite similar. In fact, Benzing et al. (2009) stress that entrepreneurs in most developing countries face an unstable, highly bureaucratic business environment. The laws governing private enterprise, especially business registration and taxation systems, are overly complex and difficult to understand. Contract and private property laws are often poorly designed and/or enforced. The unfavorable institutional/regulatory environment is often accompanied by the added expenses of corruption and bribery. Other problems faced by entrepreneurs in developing and transition economies include a generally weak economy, limited access to financial capital, an inability to hire reliable employees, and too much competition. SME owners in developing and transition economies often complain about insufficient capital. According to them, small business owners in Turkey and Egypt... among others, report similar problems obtaining loans from governmental and/or private institutions. Business owners must rely on family resources to meet their financial needs.

Another common problem to entrepreneurs in the countries covered in our study is overregulation and bureaucratic difficulties, which often result in lengthy and costly delays in clearances and approvals.

Kowalska (2012) summarized up the major challenges facing startups’:

- Dealing with legal or administrative matters
- Establishing contacts with customers
- Getting financing
- Being lonely as an entrepreneur
- Pricing goods and services
- Obtaining payment for invoices
- Finding suitable premises
- Finding suppliers
- Getting suitable personal
- Using IT effectively
- Getting backing from spouse/family



Some of the mentioned challenges apply also to young entrepreneurs. In addition, the European Union (2018c) also mentions specific obstacles to youth entrepreneurship:

- Lack of experience and practical knowledge about how to run a business which may hinder the development of their activities.
- Young people, and especially women, often lack education and experience in marketing, accounting and financial management which affects the development and sustainability of their business ventures.
- Youngsters are also unlikely to own few assets that could be used as collateral to support an application for loan finance from the banking system. This can be especially problematic for young women who often lack collateral and do not have experience of bank lending.
- Young people are also unlikely to have access to premises where they can foster their new small businesses.

As for young female entrepreneurs, the literature focuses on the problems that women experience in starting and maintaining a company, with a particular emphasis on access to education, information, funding and networks (Salman, 2022). Gould Krafft & Rizk, (2018) state that women in the MENA region specifically face unique barriers to entrepreneurship. In fact, attitudes, norms, challenges balancing work and home life and access to finance are a particular challenge for women. The relative role of women in entrepreneurship in MENA has remained stable over at least the period 2009-2016. This is the reason why female-led firms in MENA are rarer than in other regions. Benzing et al. (2009) also stress that the gender of a business owner may influence the problems he or she faces in some of the EUROMED countries. For instance, they found that Turkish women entrepreneurs experience many difficulties in starting and running a business. A majority of these problems are derived mostly

from the community's view of a woman's place in society and the traditional view against business ownership by women.

### 3.2 Promotion of youth entrepreneurship in the EUROMED region:

Entrepreneurship promotion tends to address some combination of entrepreneurship / business training, access to finance, business support services, and access to markets. For example, microfinance programs target credit constraints, but despite high hopes for their impact, microfinance programs tend to have modest effects on entrepreneurial activities (Gould Krafft & Rizk, 2018). The second most critical problem is unstable and uncertain state policies. Every government has the potential to encourage and support business development through effective tax policies, licensing procedures, and employment laws, but when a bureaucracy becomes too burdensome or redundant, it can stifle the very economic growth it was designed to promote (Benzing et al., 2009).

A study conducted by Salman (2022) in Egypt highlighted the driving forces of youth entrepreneurship on a macro and micro levels:

- Increasing internet coverage
- Specific scholarships for self-employment
- Entrepreneurship programs implemented through IT to support young people's creative ideas
- More chances to grow digital businesses
- Faster network and connection channels
- Positive economic situation accelerating the entrance of entrepreneurs from all ages
- Self-learning via many platforms...

To facilitate the development of youth and wom-

en's entrepreneurship, it is important that governments get involved and introduce entrepreneurial learning, provide information, advisory services and other forms of practical assistance, and facilitate for youth entrepreneurs, especially young women, to gain access to financial resources (European Union, 2018c). They should also provide the physical infrastructure for youth entrepreneurs to start up their businesses by creating incubator centers and start up hubs at low cost supported by advisory services and with access to financial resources.

## 4. Entrepreneurship skills and entrepreneurial education in service of youth employability

### 4.1 Entrepreneurship skills:

As previously stated, youth entrepreneurship is regarded as one of the most effective ways to address the labor-market challenges confronting youth in general, and young women, by enabling young people to establish their own businesses and creating additional jobs for other young people. For this reason, governments, private sector representatives and local, national, and international organizations work on defining the core entrepreneurship skills needed to succeed as well as the best proven ways to develop them.

Throughout our research, we found many frameworks developed and tested worldwide regrouping key entrepreneurship skills (Agommuoh & Ndirika, 2020; Alias et al., 2021; Badescu et al., 2022; Boyles & College, 2012; Eichhorst & Neder, 2014; European commission, 2022; European Union, 2018c; Glasserman-Morales & Portuguez Castro, 2021; Hashweh, 2012; Kubo, 2010; Valerio



et al., 2014). Markman & Baron (2003) state that person–organization fit theory advises that environmental forces and situations exert strong influence on entrepreneurial activities, although individuals constitute the core of the entrepreneurship phenomenon. They developed and tested a model of person–entrepreneurship fit and entrepreneurial success which includes 5 major traits of a successful entrepreneur: high self-efficacy<sup>5</sup>, ability to spot and recognize opportunities, high personal perseverance, high human and social capital<sup>6</sup>, and superior social skills. For Khoury & Omran (2012), the skills needed by entrepreneurs fall into three distinct categories: technical skills, business management skills, and personal entrepreneurial skills. Technical skills include written and oral communication, technical management, and organizing skills. Business management skills are managerial skills like planning, decision making marketing and accounting. Entrepreneurs also should have personal skills such as innovation, risk taking, and persistence.

Boldureanu et al. (2020) on the other hand conducted an extensive research that reported on several characteristics of successful entrepreneurs, such as preference for risk, independence, optimism, creativity, initiative, leadership, desire for success... etc. But they state that in more recent studies, the basic features outlining the profile of an entrepreneur include a developed sense of independence, the desire to take responsibility and run a business, increased capacity for intense and lasting effort, preference for moderate risk-taking in business; rapid reaction, prompt decisions in current activity, efficient organization of working time....

As mentioned before, with the great number of studies covering the entrepreneurship skills and successful entrepreneurs' salient traits, we chose to focus our study on EntreComp, the “European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework” developed by the European Commission in 2018 (European Union, 2018a). This framework is a reference that explains what is meant by an entrepreneurial mindset and offers a comprehensive description of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that people need to be entrepreneurial and create financial, cultural or social value for others. Since its conception, this tool has been used in many ways across the globe:

- Influencing policy,
- Developing EET programs to foster entrepreneurship,
- Evaluating entrepreneurs' skills,
- Recruiting and managing human resources ...

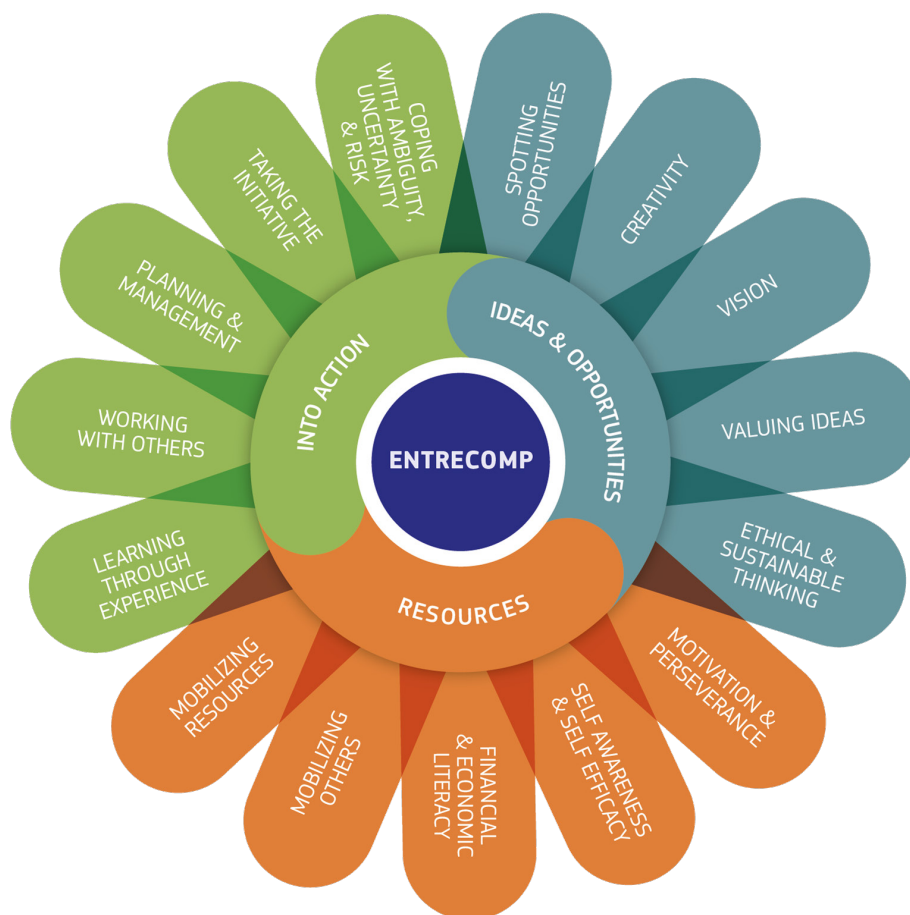


5 Self-efficacy refers to the extent to which persons believe that they can organize and effectively execute actions to produce given attainments.

6 Intellectual capital and talented labor force.

EntreComp encompasses 15 key competences distributed over 3 main areas (European Union, 2018a).

**Figure 3: The EntreComp wheel**



Source: European Union, page 14

## 4.2 Entrepreneurship education and training:

The variety of potential beneficial spillovers of entrepreneurship in turn focuses attention on interventions that stimulate individuals' decisions to become and succeed as entrepreneurs. One of the forms of these interventions is EET. A number of international, regional, national, and local actors are taking part in the global experiment of EE and EET. Today, EET is recognized as an established field of study, growing in parallel with the interest of policymakers and students.

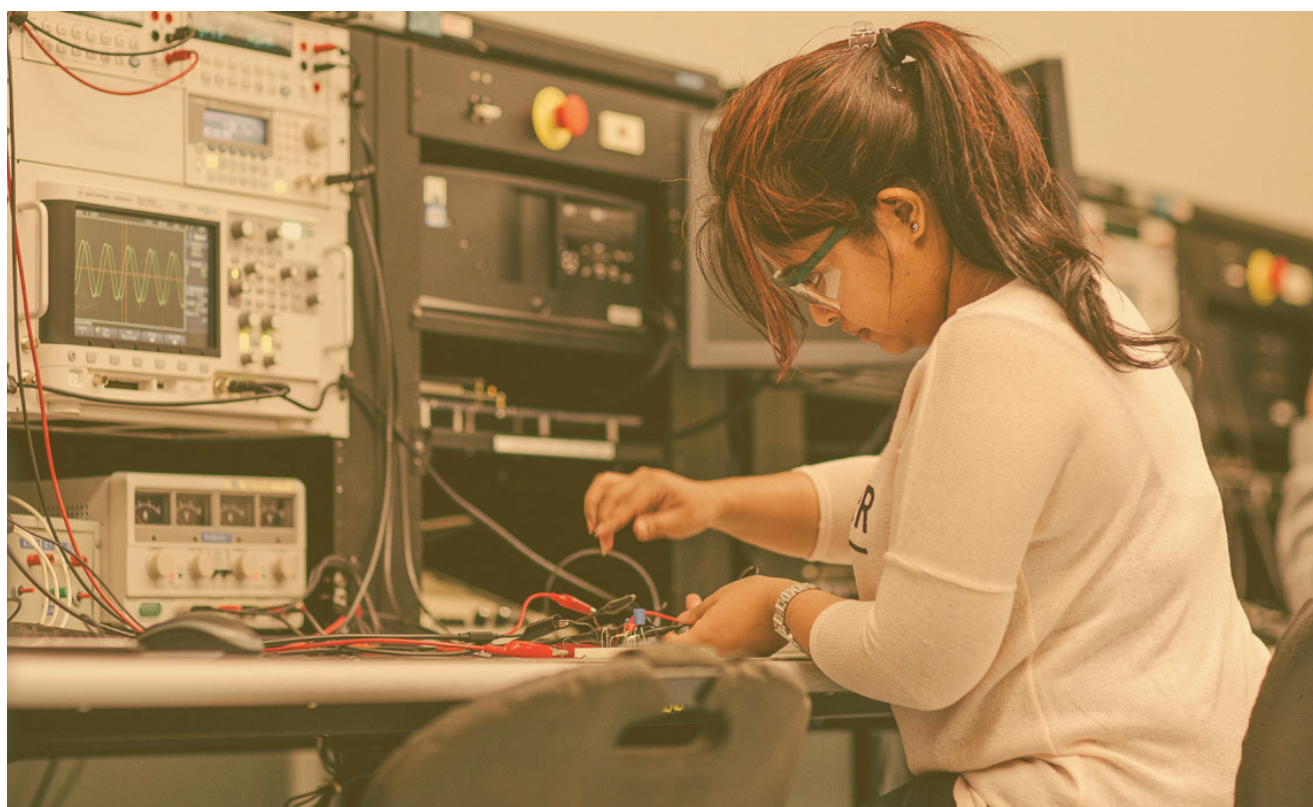
In the present research, we will focus on the second and third uses of EntreComp since we intent on investigating the potential role of higher education and capacity building programs in developing key entrepreneurship skills. In fact, the EET represents academic education or formal training interventions that share the broad objective of providing individuals with the entrepreneurial mindsets and skills to support participation and performance in a range of entrepreneurial activities (Valerio et al., 2014). Throughout our desk review, we found that it has been proven over the years that EET is vital to create opportunities for young people. In fact, creating one's own business is an important outlet for young people with ideas and energy and limited prospects of formal employment like in our eight target

countries. Even if EE does not lead necessarily to a start-up creation, entrepreneurial learning equips young people with soft skills and transversal competences (creativity, working with others, spotting opportunities, taking initiative...) that stand them in good stead in the current challenging labor markets.

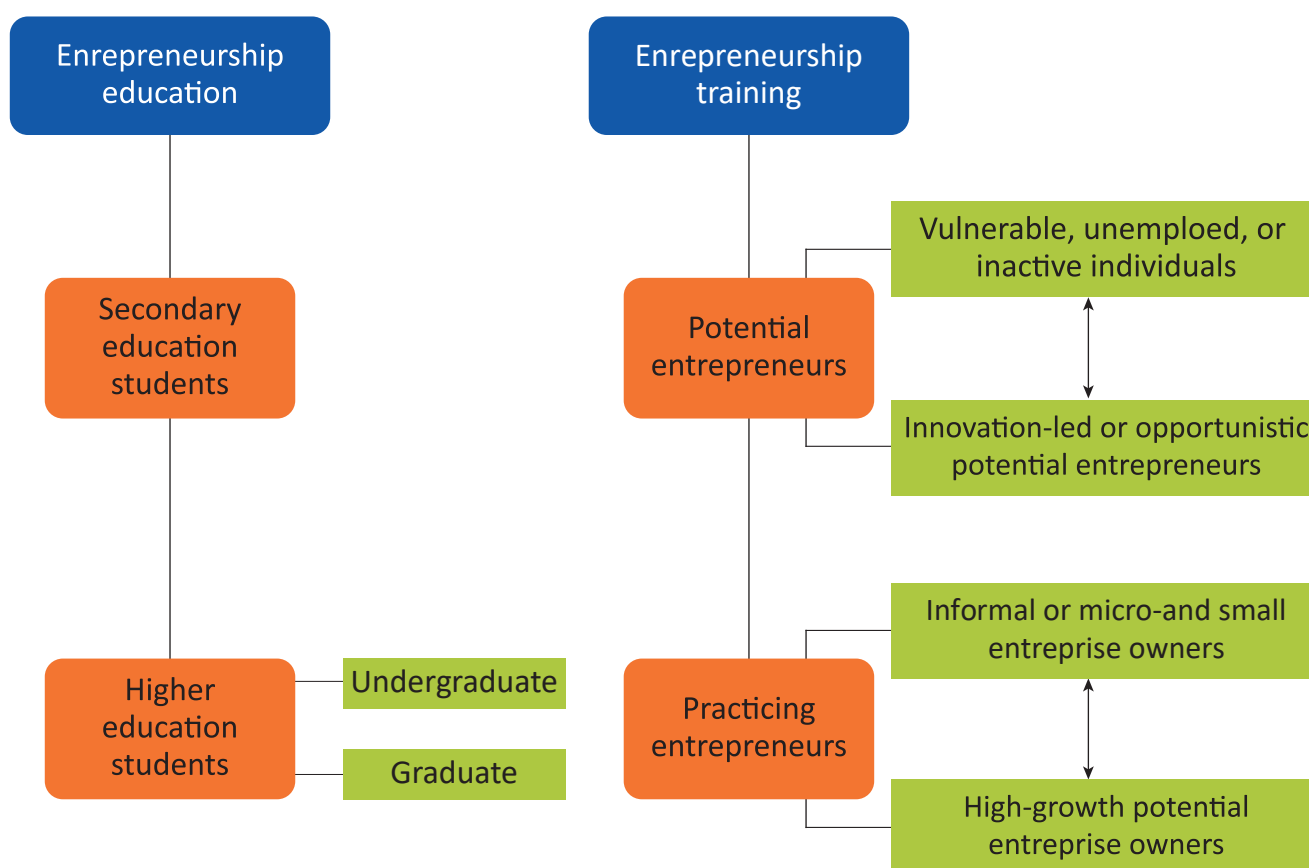
Both variations of entrepreneurship learning may aim to stimulate entrepreneurship as well as support individuals and enterprises already engaged in entrepreneurial activities. EET beneficiaries include both potential and practicing entrepreneurs who are traditional students enrolled in degree programs, early school leavers, adult learners, individuals with doctoral degrees, minority groups, women, and rural as well as urban populations.

### ***Typology for EET Programs:***

EET programs can be classified under two related but distinct categories: education and training programs (see figure 4). In general, both forms of entrepreneurship learning aim to stimulate entrepreneurship, but they are distinguished from one another by their variety of program objectives or outcomes. In fact, EE programs tend to focus on building knowledge and skills about or for the purpose of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship training (ET) programs, on the contrary, tend to focus on building knowledge and skills, explicitly in preparation for starting or operating an enterprise (Valerio et al., 2014). Also, these programs can be differentiated by their target audiences. The academic nature of EE targets two groups in particular: secondary education students and higher education students. By contrast, ET programs target a range of potential and practicing entrepreneurs who are not part of formal, degree-granting programs.



**Figure 4:** Classifying Entrepreneurship Education and Training Programs



Source: Valerio & al (2014), page 3

### **Outcomes of EET Programs :**

There are several objectives that EET programs target within the broader domains of entrepreneurial mindsets and capabilities as well as entrepreneurial status and performance. It has been empirically proven that entrepreneurship education and training have positive impacts on individuals’ risk taking, enterprise education, inclination to be self-employed, and income/welfare generation. EET is an important method encouraging entrepreneurship because it gives a feeling of independence and self-confidence to individuals, it enables the recognition of alternative career options, it broadens the individuals’ horizons by enabling them to better perceive the opportunities and provides the knowledge that individuals will use in developing new business opportunities (Doğan, 2015). Through adequate EET, an individual acquires the skills and knowledge needed for establishing and developing a new business.

Across EET program types, there is an increased emphasis on outcomes in the status and performance domains; and among EE programs, there is also a notable emphasis on mindsets and the associated outcomes of socioemotional skills and entrepreneurship awareness (Valerio et al., 2014).



### 4.3 Entrepreneurial learning in the target countries:

Gould Krafft & Rizk (2018) conducted an extensive study on entrepreneurship promotion programs that we will reference throughout this part of the report. The mentioned study's field is the MENA region globally, including many of the target countries of our study specifically. These researchers concluded that entrepreneurship programs tend to target higher education graduates, who experience the highest rates of unemployment. In Tunisia over 2010-2012, approximately 11,700 individuals (mostly university graduates) benefited from entrepreneurship programs (European Training Foundation, 2014). In Egypt, skills training and entrepreneurship promotion programs are dominant among the 182 youth employment programs.

One important aspect of the landscape of the active labor market policies generally and entrepreneurship promotion programs specifically in MENA is the fragmentation, with numerous different programs and policies. Although the landscape of such programs is fragmentary, its reach is large. For example, Injaz, a MENA-wide entrepreneurship promotion program, aims to reach a million students annually by 2022. Silatech, a MENA organization developed many initiatives targeting entrepreneurship promotion. Yet there have been very few rigorous evaluations of programs effectiveness, despite the substantial resources invested.

The evidence that we have on entrepreneurship promotion programs in MENA suggests that they are ineffective. For instance, a randomized experiment of Turkey's vocational training programs for the unemployed found no effect of training on

employment, and only a transitory effect on employment quality. An experimental evaluation of an entrepreneurial track in Tunisian higher education found a small increase in self-employment, but no increase in overall employment rates. A program in Egypt around entrepreneurship improved attitudes towards entrepreneurship but did not change any employment outcomes. Programs may be better able to promote self-employment among marginalized communities and women. Although not an experimental intervention, a program offering vocational, business, and life skills training in rural Egypt saw increases primarily in self-employment.

Another report from the European Union (2018c) covers the dimensions of formal and informal entrepreneurship training and education in our target countries. In fact, some countries have introduced entrepreneurial learning into the core curricula at secondary or tertiary levels of education. In Egypt, entrepreneurial learning in secondary schools is promoted through the "National MSME Strategy 2017" of the Ministry of Trade and Industry. The Ministry of Education and Technical Training has proposed the mainstreaming of entrepreneurship as a key competence in all vocational schools and has led the development of an entrepreneurship curriculum. The Luxor governorate has piloted entrepreneurship as a key competence in vocational schools through the IMKAN initiative. In Turkey, entrepreneurship is taught as an elective subject in primary and secondary education and in vocational and education and training. Virtual companies are used in vocational schools to support entrepreneurship training. Within the higher education system, entrepreneurship is mainly taught in business schools and technical faculties.

As for the informal education and training, numerous programmes provide learning opportunities of the basics of entrepreneurship. In Egypt, the Youth entrepreneurship Programme run by AMIDEAST in collaboration with Citi bank offers a six-month training program backed up with incubator capacity and financial and legal consultation for 18–30-year-olds living in Cairo. Elsewhere, informal training is provided by NGOs. One of these, called Injaz, is an international NGO, which operates in Egypt as well. In Turkey, informal education is provided with the support of major international companies such as Google and Visa.



# II - Skills and education for successful entrepreneurship in the EUROMED countries: results of our field study





## 1. Methodology

The TC on youth and women’s entrepreneurship has commissioned the present study to get a clearer and updated view on youth entrepreneurship in the region and then develop an appropriate action plan, taking into consideration the specificities of the eight countries represented as well as the differences between the northern and southern shorelines of the EUROMED.

With this in mind, the purpose of this research is to provide an overview and analysis of youth and women’s entrepreneurship and policies, with a particular emphasis on entrepreneurship skills, education, and training. It will aid in the analysis of the measures implemented to promote youth entrepreneurship in the target countries in order to recommend practical measures that can be implemented to foster youth and women’s entrepreneurship.

To be more precise, this study’s main goal is to answer the following question: **“What are the key skills needed to succeed as a young entrepreneur?”**. More specifically, throughout the different phases of the study we’ll answer these key questions:

- What do we mean by entrepreneurial competencies?
- What knowledge, skills, dispositions, and attitudes are needed to develop a successful entrepreneur?
- How important is skills development for youth entrepreneurship?
- What approaches have been used in the target countries to develop youth and women’s entrepreneurship? What approach, or mixture of approaches, might be useful in the target countries?

- What are the main challenges faced by young entrepreneurs and how can they be addressed?
- What recommendations can be given to enhance the capacity of the education system to prepare youngsters for the labor market or, to produce graduates with entrepreneurship skills?

To accomplish this, we used a mixed methodology in this study, combining a qualitative first phase and then a quantitative phase. The table below lists the various tools developed to better understand the realities of the youth entrepreneurship system in the targeted countries:





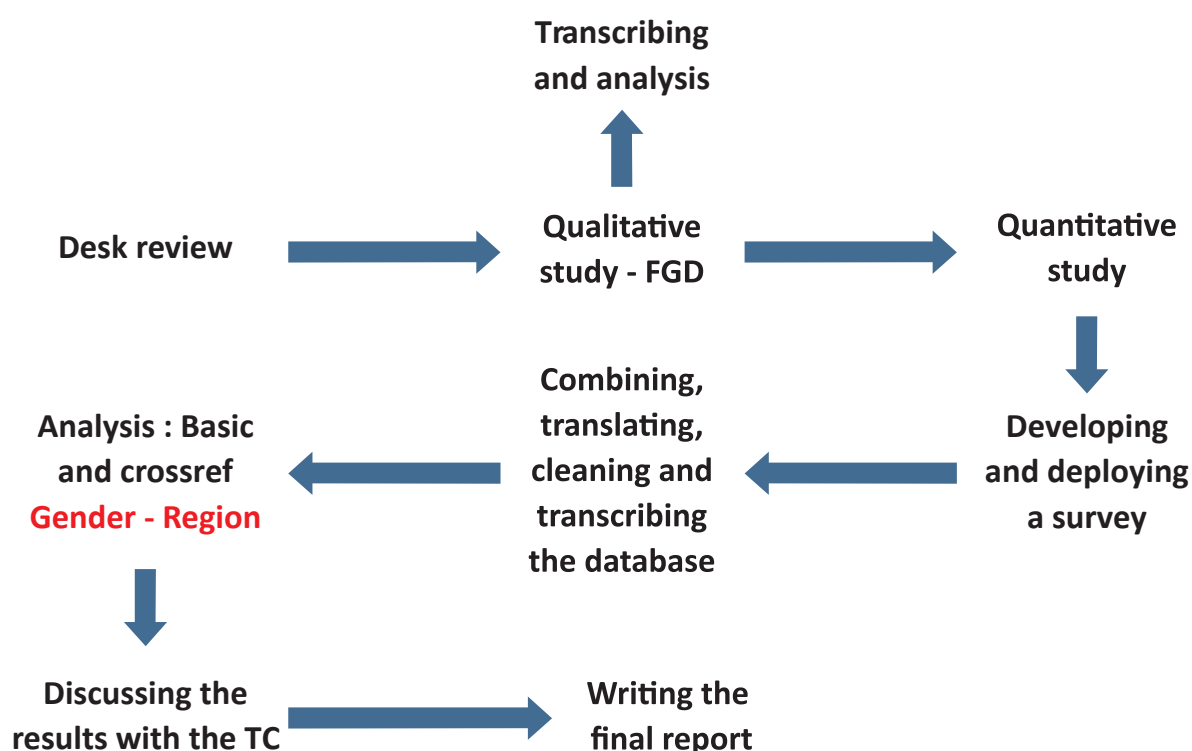
**Table 1:** Tools used in this research

<b>Literature review</b>	<b>Main goal</b>	Reviewing existing studies, consultancy reports, policies and recommendation of various national and regional experts tackling youth entrepreneurship and skills in the target countries
<b>Qualitative study (Focus Group Discussion)</b>	<b>Main goal</b>	Completing the insights gathered in the desk review - Identifying key skills needed by young entrepreneurs nowadays
	<b>Members</b>	Representatives of the private sector from all investigated countries
	<b>Number of participants</b>	8 (one to two members from each country)
	<b>Insights gathered</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Skills needed to succeed as entrepreneur</li> <li>▪ Ways that make EET more impactful</li> <li>▪ Challenges faced by young entrepreneurs nowadays</li> <li>▪ Key recommendations from the private sector's representatives</li> </ul>
<b>Quantitative study (Survey)</b>	<b>Main goal</b>	Identifying key skills needed by young entrepreneurs
	<b>Target</b>	Young male and female entrepreneurs aged 18 to 35 living in the target countries
	<b>Sample size</b>	102 replies in total selected using random sampling to insure the best representation of young entrepreneurs in all countries. The committee members ensured spreading the online survey in their respective networks to get the results in a timely manner.
	<b>Insights gathered</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Skills needed to succeed as a young entrepreneur</li> <li>- Comparison of answers between countries and their segregation by sex</li> <li>- Challenges faced by young entrepreneurs in each country</li> <li>- Importance of EET for young entrepreneurs</li> <li>- Key recommendations from young entrepreneurs</li> </ul>



The FGD was conducted during the Med Business Days<sup>1</sup>, with participation from TC members and private sector representatives from the targeted countries. The survey was administered online and included 14 questions, 5 of which were identification questions, with the EntreComp model serving as the foundation for the rest. The diagram below describes in detail the various steps of the research methodology used:

**Figure 5:** Research methodology



Source: Prepared by the author

## 2. Skills and education for successful entrepreneurship in the EUROMED countries

### 2.1 Perspective of the private sector: Results of the qualitative study

There are common challenges faced by young entrepreneurs in the EUROMED region, the difference is their complexity from country to country.

We can summarize them as follows:

- No well-defined business plan, which is necessary to have access to funding and support from the government and other institutions
- Lack of organizations serving young entrepreneurs, and especially women (governmental and private organizations)
- Lack of policies that encourage entrepreneurship
- Bureaucracy is also one of the major challenges mentioned by many employers, especially from the southern region of the Mediterranean.

- Difficulty of access to private and public funding, especially when starting a business, because entrepreneurs don't usually keep a track record of their finances.
- In some of the southern Mediterranean countries, foreign exchange regulations are hindering the scalability of businesses.

To address these challenges, the private sector suggests establishing a platform that brings together the government and other stakeholders in the entrepreneurship sphere to bring them closer to what's going on in the field and the specific needs of young entrepreneurs in their respective countries. This platform can also benefit entrepreneurs by acting as a one-stop shop for them. Another option is to reinforce creating incubators / accelerators to encourage entrepreneurs, especially that funding isn't always the main challenge that they face. These platforms can also be used to mentor younger entrepreneurs. Networking is also a critical solution for young entrepreneurs, particularly young female entrepreneurs, from various countries to benchmark and exchange best practices. The involvement of the government is essential in the entrepreneurial sphere through detaxation or reducing taxes for young entrepreneurs and SMEs as well as opening public procurements to young entrepreneurs (using a quota for instance). Palestine has a good practice to benchmark with the creation of the Ministry of entrepreneurs, dedicated to serve and facilitate the entrepreneurs' journey.

As for the top skills needed for entrepreneurs to succeed, they mentioned: Common sense, communication and social skills, positive attitude, technical skills, emotional intelligence, agility,

leadership and teamwork. They added that there is a gap between the content provided in the EET and the needs of the labor market. To improve its outcomes, EET programs should include all technical and soft skills needed for in the curricula to better prepare youngsters. Another important aspect is also to include volunteer work, entrepreneurship competitions and events in the ES, since secondary school and make internships in companies mandatory to better equip youngsters for entrepreneurship and prepare them to the exact needs of the labor market.

## 2.2 Young entrepreneurs' perspective: Results of the quantitative study

### *Description of the sample:*

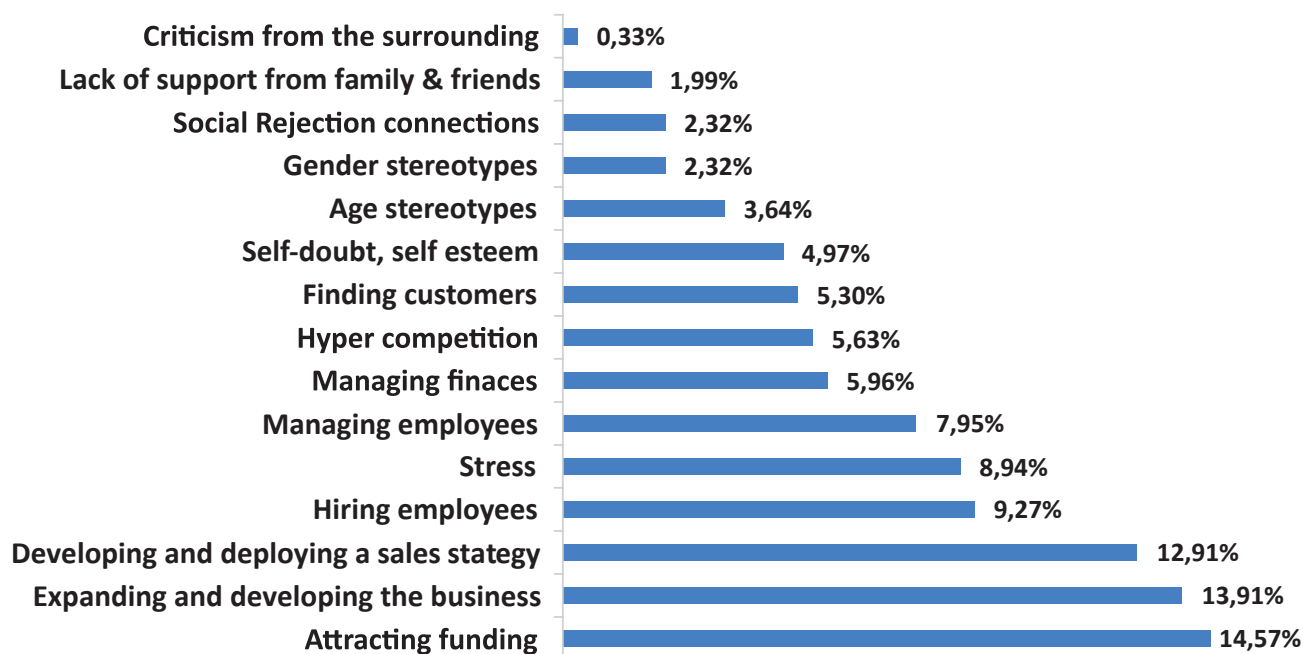
Our quantitative study targeted more than 1100 entrepreneurs across the studied countries with a response rate of 9.27%. from the 102 respondents. Our sample is representative because it is made up of 53% young male entrepreneurs and 47% young female entrepreneurs, and 53% represent young entrepreneurs from the northern EUROMED region and 47% from the southern.

Also, 66% of the respondents are aged 30-35, 29% are aged 25-29 and only 5% are aged less than 25 years old. From the total of respondents, 59% of the entrepreneurs in our sample have a master's degree or higher, 31% have a bachelor's degree, and 10% are high school graduates. Finally, 64% of the sample is made up of micro or small businesses, while 36% is made up of medium-sized businesses.

## Main challenges faced by young entrepreneurs and proposed solutions:

As shown in the next figure, the top three challenges faced by young entrepreneurs are funding, expanding and developing their businesses, and sales:

**Figure 6:** Key challenges of youth entrepreneurship in the EUROMED region



Despite the fact that most of the challenges are mentioned frequently, there are some distinctions to be made between the north and south, as well as female and male respondents:

**Table 2:** Specific challenges faced by male and female young entrepreneurs in the north/south Mediterranean countries

Female - North	Male - North	Female - South	Male - South
Expanding and developing the business	Developing and deploying a sales strategy	Attracting funding	Attracting funding
Self-doubt, self esteem	Expanding and developing the business	Stress	Developing and deploying a sales strategy
Developing and deploying a sales strategy	Managing employees	Developing and deploying a sales strategy	Expanding and developing the business

Funding is not listed as one of the top three most pressing challenges for northern entrepreneurs. On the contrary, it is the first challenge mentioned by both male and female southern entrepreneurs. This can be explained by the fact that the majority of southern respondents own Micro businesses. We also note that stress is a particular issue for women entrepreneurs in the southern region.

To overcome these obstacles, young entrepreneurs suggest focusing on 4 major aspects:

**Figure 7:** General solutions to empower young entrepreneurs in the EUROMED region



When we examine responses from North/South Euro-Mediterranean countries, as well as male and female respondents, we can see many similarities because the four solutions cited in the figure above were mentioned by all categories of respondents. Other frequently mentioned solutions:

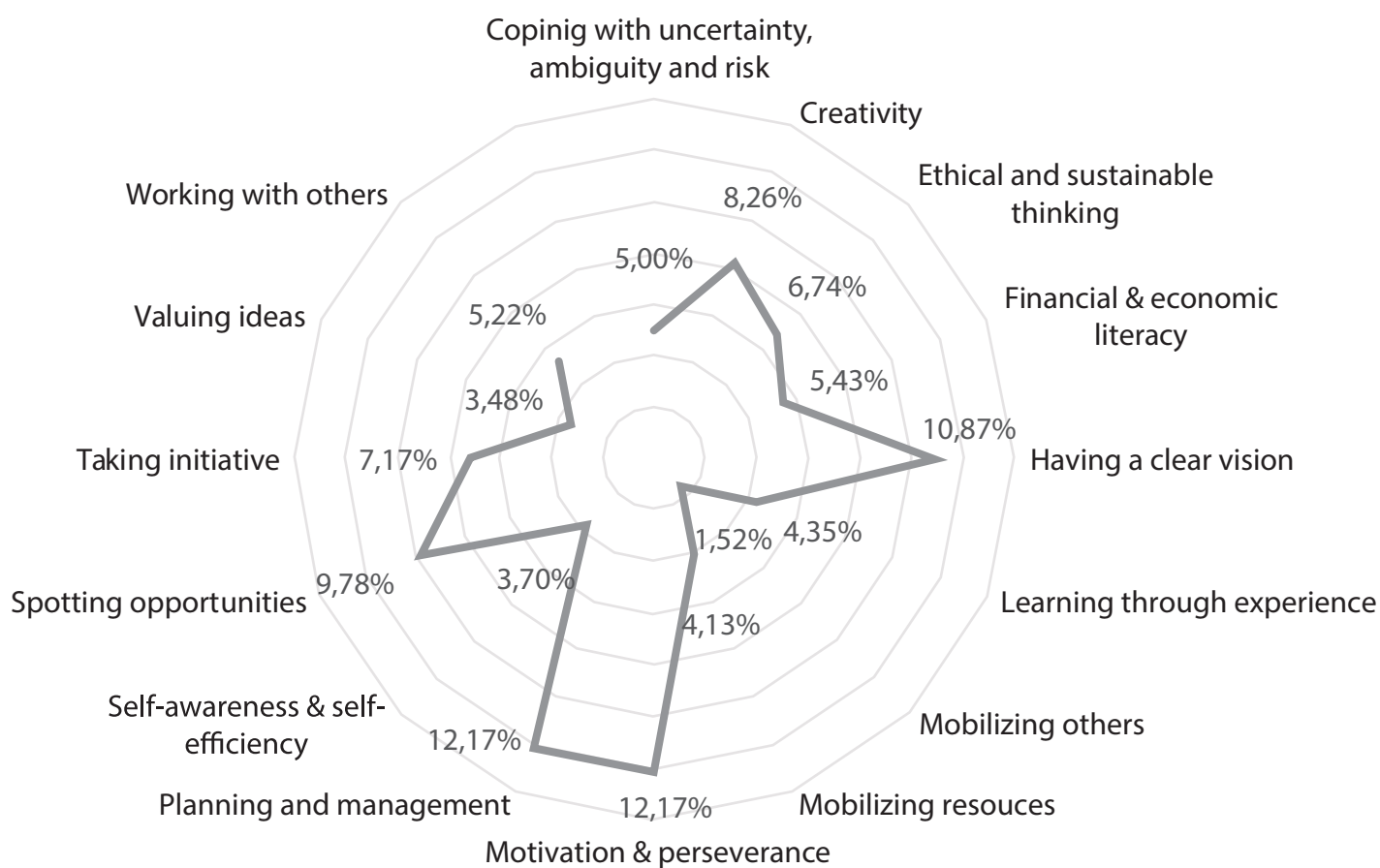
- Including EET in the education system as early and as practical as possible (technical: management, finance...& soft: working smart...)
- Informing about current opportunities for young entrepreneurs
- Developing platforms and events for young entrepreneurs: venture capital centers, coworking spaces, bootcamps, meetings with investors, incubators...



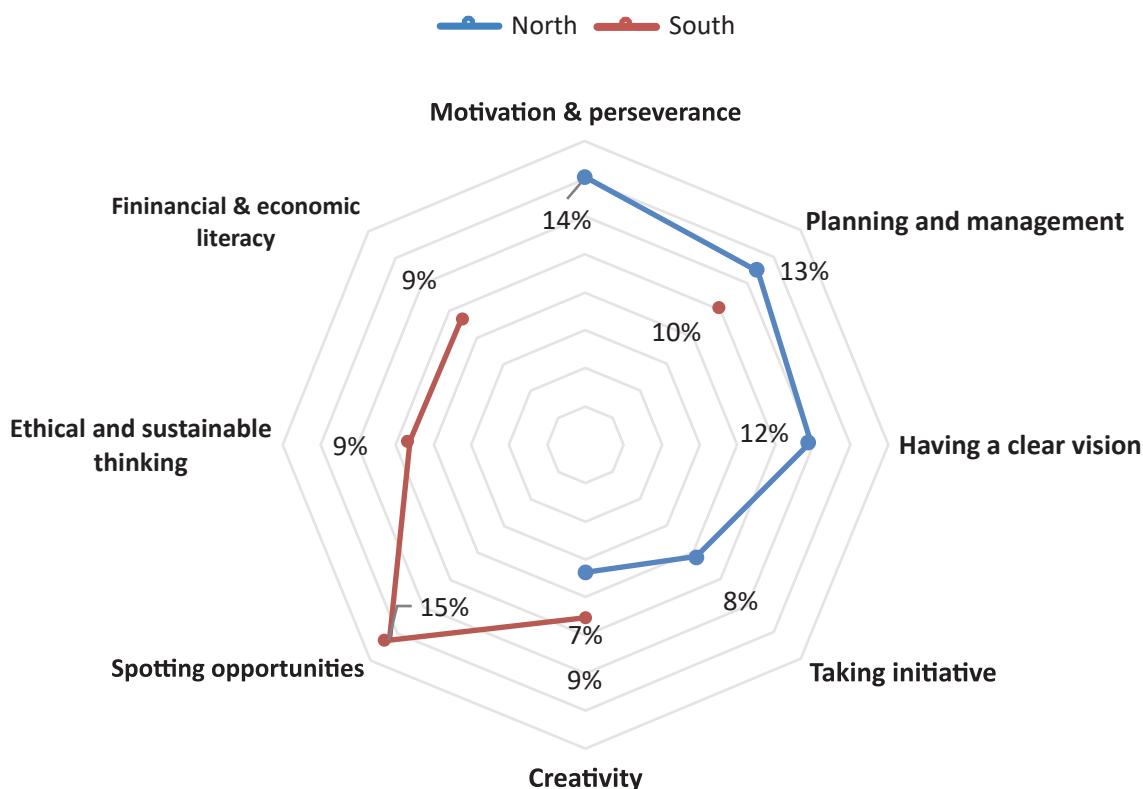
## Key skills needed for successful youth entrepreneurship:

All 15 skills from the EntreComp framework were rated important or very important by at least 70% of the respondents, mobilizing others was noted important by 62% of the respondents and 27% were neutral about this skills. 8 were noted important to very important by more than 80% of respondents. As for the major skills needed for a successful entrepreneurship journey, the respondents' top 5 answers include: Motivation and perseverance, planning and management, having a clear vision, spotting opportunities and creativity (see the following figure).

**Figure 8:** Importance of EntreComp's entrepreneurship skills in the EUROMED region



**Figure 9:** Difference of importance of EntreComp’s entrepreneurship skills between north and south Mediterranean respondents



Two skills were mentioned by both EUROMED shoresides: planning and management, as well as creativity. Aside from that, northern respondents value motivation and perseverance, as well as having a clear vision and taking initiative. Southern entrepreneurs prioritize financial and economic literacy, ethical and sustainable thinking, and identifying business opportunities. The latter is ranked first for both male and female southern entrepreneurs, and financial and economic literacy were heavily cited only by female southern entrepreneurs.

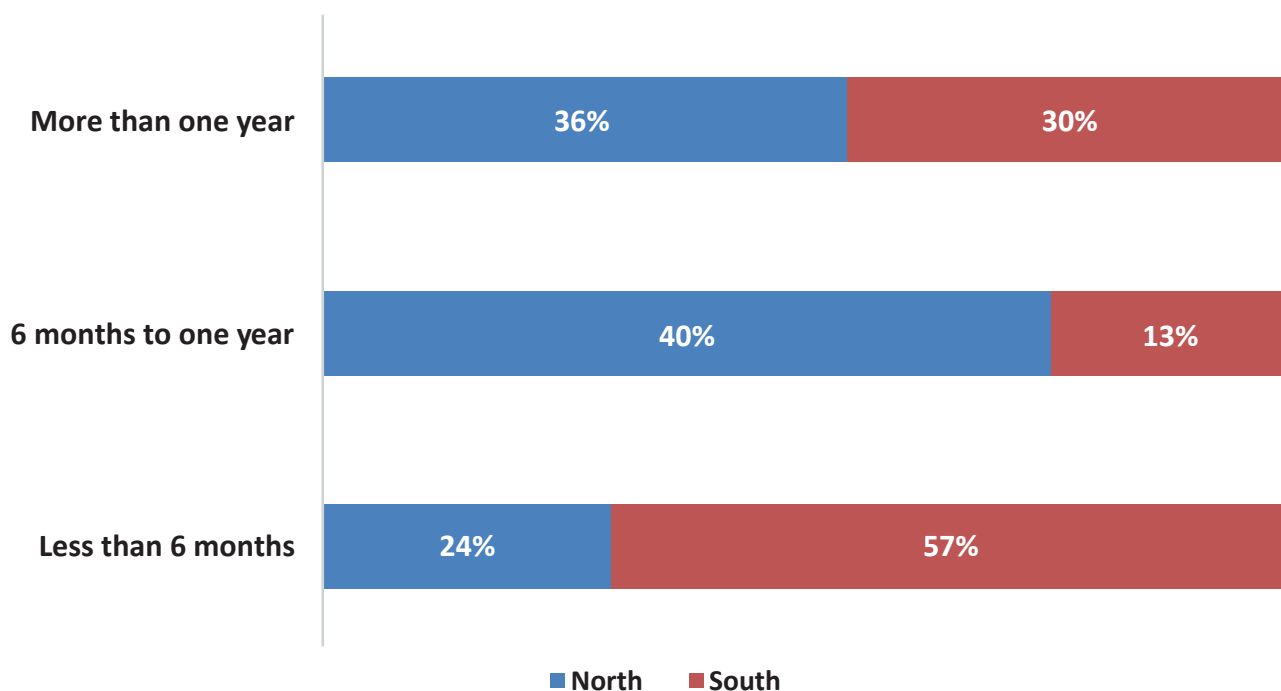
**Table 3:** Specific skills needed to succeed for male and female young entrepreneurs in the north/south Mediterranean countries

North - Female	North - Male	South - Female	South - Male
Motivation & perseverance	Motivation & perseverance	Spotting opportunities	Spotting opportunities
Planning and management	Having a clear vision	Ethical and sustainable thinking	Having a clear vision
Having a clear vision	Planning and management	Financial & economic literacy	Motivation & perseverance
Creativity	Taking initiative	Planning and management	Creativity
Learning through experience	Spotting opportunities	Creativity	Planning and management

## EET and its impact on youth's entrepreneurial success

58% of the sample received some form of entrepreneurship education and training in the last few years and 81% of them felt that it had a tangible impact on the success of their entrepreneurship journey. When we examined our findings more closely, we discovered a link between the impact felt and the length of the entrepreneurship trainings received:

**Figure 10:** Duration of EET and its impact



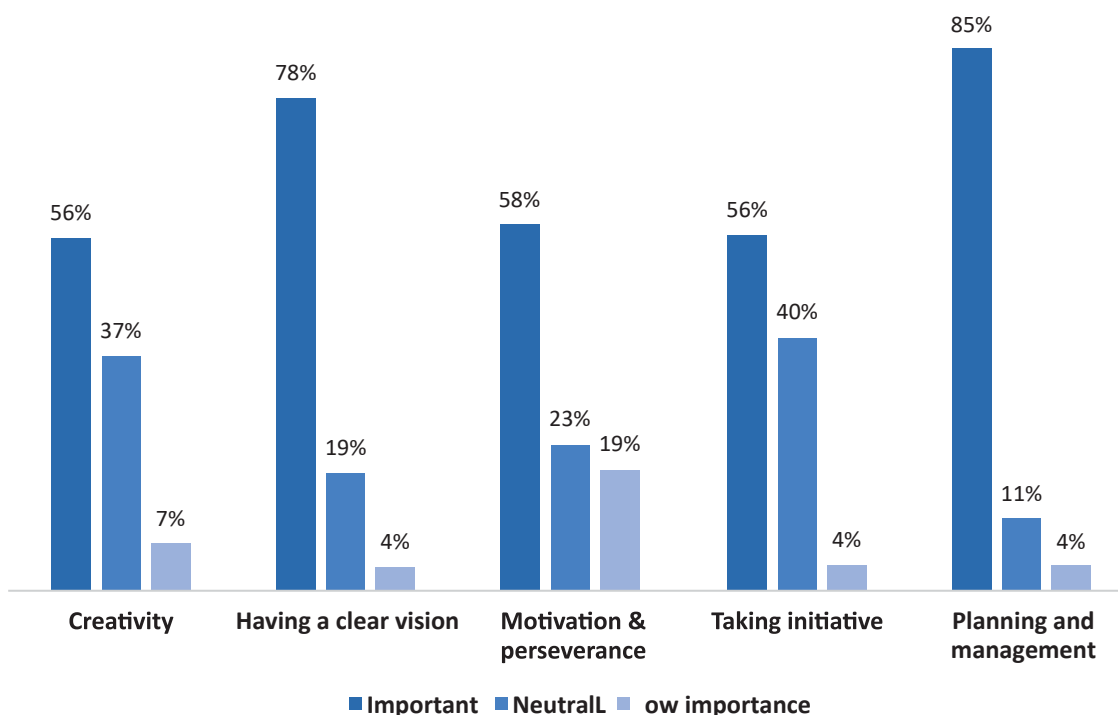
In fact, in the northern Mediterranean, most of the impact felt was in the EET going from 6 months to one year. In the south, most of the respondents felt an impact in programs of less than 6 months.

As for the weight of skills in the EET received, young entrepreneurs state that the lowest importance is given generally to : Mobilizing others (47%), self-awareness & self-efficiency (54%) and ethical and sustainable thinking (58%). This has no bearing on the EET's quality because, as previously stated, these skills are not ranked among the top five most important skills required to succeed in entrepreneurship. We proceeded to analyze the importance given to the specific skills cited as important by northern and southern entrepreneurs :

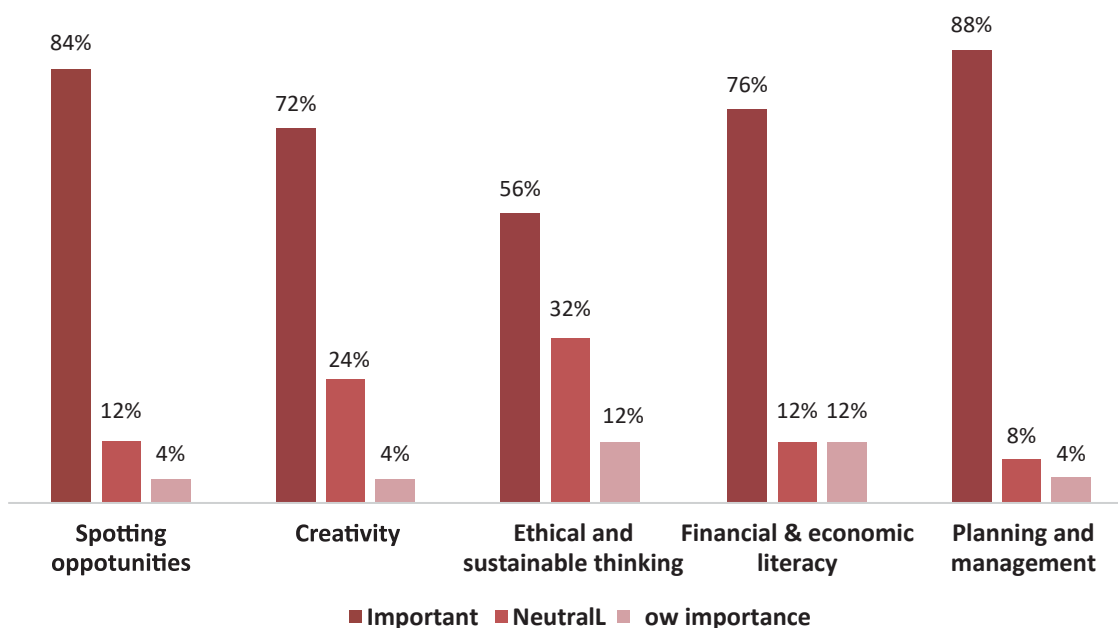




**Figure 11:** Importance in EET of the top 5 skills that are mentioned as important for entrepreneurial success for northern young entrepreneurs



**Figure 12:** Importance in EET of the top 5 skills that are mentioned as important for entrepreneurial success for southern young entrepreneurs



Also, we highlighted earlier the importance of other specific skills needed by each gender in both regions. The respondents stress that “Learning through experience” is relatively covered in the EET taken (52%). The 3 other needed skills are more present: Spotting opportunities (63%), having a clear vision (76%) and motivation & perseverance (76%). This implies that the EET programs proposed in the target countries do include the necessary skills to succeed as young entrepreneurs, with slight differences between the north and the south regions.

As for the proposed solutions to enhance EET programs, thus better preparing youngsters to become successful entrepreneurs, we have many similarities, but the top common suggestion between northern and southern female and male entrepreneurs is to include entrepreneurship as a component of the education system as early as possible to better prepare future entrepreneurs from a young age. Following that, the importance of inviting entrepreneurs and professionals to teach in the various programs offered, as well as combining theoretical and practical education, was emphasized. Southern female young entrepreneurs also emphasize the importance of using more practical case studies to improve EET programs that are currently available.

### **3. Recommendations**

As mentioned throughout our results' analysis, we notice many similarities in youth entrepreneurship challenges, incentives and common aspects related to the EET system provided and its impact. Of course, there are also some distinctions between male and female young entrepreneurs as well as northern and southern ones. The factors that contribute to the success of SMEs vary significantly depending on many variables. However, as with most entrepreneurial studies (Benzing et al., 2009), we will focus our recommendations on developing the psychological and personality traits of entrepreneurs, the managerial skills and training of entrepreneurs, and the external environment.

To that end, we recommend building on the feedback we received from employers and young entrepreneurs about the challenges and skills needed for successful entrepreneurship. We'll also compare them with their perceptions of current EET programs in which they've participated. As a result, we will propose more appropriate and tailored programs and policies that address the specific needs and aspirations of young entrepreneurs from the north, south, and both genders.

#### ***Improving the ecosystem of youth entrepreneurship***

- Dedicating specific organizations/programs/incubators/accelerators to young entrepreneurs, and young female entrepreneurs, as it has been demonstrated that they have less access to financing and assets to launch and sustain their businesses, in addition to cultural challenges.
- There is an increasing number of policies and programs dedicated to youth entrepreneurship in the various target countries; we propose tweaking them to target specific common needs and challenges faced by entrepreneurs, while taking into account differences between male and female entrepreneurs in the north and south EUROMED.
- Governmental agencies in all countries should work on improving the local business environment for young entrepreneurs by removing any local by-laws that may restrict business and start-ups and

by reducing or eliminating fees, charges and taxes on business activities carried out by young people.

- Funding problems are mentioned heavily in all countries as a hinder to youth entrepreneurship, especially from respondents from southern EUROMED countries. We stress that there is an urgent need not only to develop specific funding or micro funding for our target beneficiaries, but also to dedicate specific funding for female entrepreneurs and develop a proper communication strategy about it in order to widen its reach. We suggest assisting young women in identifying available sources of finance and providing guarantees for local banks loans to young women entrepreneurs with attractive business ideas and business plans.
- Bureaucracy was mentioned by both private sector representatives and young entrepreneurs as a common challenge, particularly in southern EUROMED countries. It has an impact on the system's effectiveness and the willingness of start-ups to pursue their business ideas. We recommend that administrations work on developing more flexible systems and using training and leadership to encourage the development of a more entrepreneurial mindset among their staff. One important tool for overcoming this challenge is better use of information technology, as most target countries have already begun to implement digital processes.
- Create and implement a platform that brings together all stakeholders in the entrepreneurship space (governments, employment agencies, private businesses, Chambers of Commerce, NGOs...) to bring them closer to the realities of youth entrepreneurship as well as their specific needs and aspirations. This platform can also be beneficial to entrepreneurs because it can serve as a one-stop shop for a variety of entrepreneurial services, provide information about current opportunities, and facilitate networking<sup>7</sup>. One salient example of a success story worth mentioning here is the MEAINDEX<sup>8</sup>, an online toolbox for business entrepreneurs developed by Malta Employers' Association (MEA). This website serves as a one-stop-shop for Maltese entrepreneurs, giving them all information and training they need to launch and manage their companies. Some of the website's features include : checklist for launching a business, current schemes and incentives for entrepreneurs, available training programs and courses ....
- Mentoring and coaching, especially by experienced businesspersons from the same fields of expertise, are more and more demanded by younger entrepreneurs. It has been empirically proven that it can help them navigate through the difficulties they encounter more smoothly and overcome common challenges faced in their countries.
- International donors should step up support for youth entrepreneurship at local level, modelled on best practice identified in each of the target countries studied.
- Currently, in a world that is becoming digitally driven, especially after COVID-19, the cyberspace becomes an opportunity for youngsters and women who are aiming to create and run businesses (Salman, 2022). We suggest using IT as a leverage in the EUROMED region.

<sup>8</sup> Due to a lack of experience, the latter was frequently mentioned as one of the skills required for young start uppers

<sup>9</sup> Link: <https://index.maltaemployers.com/>

- Conducting a market scan of each country to identify the main facilities provided to encourage entrepreneurship and foreign investment, build on them and reinforce them for young entrepreneurs as well.

- Implementing quotas for young entrepreneurs in general, and young female entrepreneurs. For example, as mentioned by private sector representatives during our FGD, this may give them room to compete for public procurement deals.

While it is recommended to use age and gender quotas as key mechanisms to address the underrepresentation of young and female entrepreneurs (United Nations, 2020)<sup>9</sup>, this tool is to be used with extreme caution. In fact, in some of the target countries of our study, up until now there has been a strong resistance against quotas as well as serious questions such as generating discrimination against male entrepreneurs. To address this limit, the concept of quotas should be tailored and more specified. For instance, organizations with a high percentage of young entrepreneurs and/or young female entrepreneurs can obtain an additional score in public tenders and/or in public funding...

### ***Reinforcing the skills and education systems for entrepreneurship***

- Incorporating EE as early in the educational system as possible in order to better prepare future entrepreneurs. To do that, we propose that governments and other stakeholders assist local schools and universities in the implementation of entrepreneurial education programs. We also

recommend beginning EE in elementary and middle school, to help children develop an entrepreneurial mindset from an early age.

- EET programs should include the top technical skills (creating a proper Business Plan, planning and management, managing finances...) as well as the top soft skills (motivation and perseverance, stress management, social skills, negotiation, having a clear vision, spotting opportunities, creativity, motivation, and perseverance...) as identified by private sector representatives and young entrepreneurs in our survey and focus group. The proposed content should be practical, with theoretical and practical teachings included.

- In the northern EUROMED countries, EET programs should give more space for 3 of the top skills needed to succeed the entrepreneurship endeavor: creativity, motivation and perseverance, and taking initiative.

- In the southern EUROMED countries, EET programs should give more space for “ethical and sustainable thinking<sup>10</sup>” as it was cited as one of the top skills needed to succeed the entrepreneurship endeavor.

- There is a problem with business sustainability. Indeed, it was stated that while it is relatively easy to start a business, it is much more difficult to sustain it. This is understandable given that the majority of entrepreneurs list expanding the business and developing a sales strategy as the main challenges they face in their businesses. Future EET programs should prioritize these technical skills.

- Stress management was mentioned among the top challenges faced only by southern young female entrepreneurs. This is perfectly understandable in the difficult and highly volatile business environment we operate in today. This soft skill should be introduced in specific EET programs for women in south EUROMED countries and, could be beneficial for all early stage and aspiring entrepreneurs in general.

- In the northern Mediterranean, the majority of the impact was felt in EET programs ranging from six months to a year. Most respondents in the south felt an impact in programs lasting less than six months. This critical factor should be considered to better guide stakeholders in the development of their future programs. Also, given the busy schedules of start-ups, which may prevent them from receiving proper capacity building, a solution could be to provide local evening courses for young people, particularly young women, in the aforementioned business skills in collaboration with local colleges and local NGOs.

- All EET programs should include volunteer work, entrepreneurship competitions and oth-

er various entrepreneurship events since it has been proven that they play a great role in shaping one's personality and refining their skills. As for high school and higher education students, internships in companies should become mandatory in the ES to better equip youngsters as early as possible for entrepreneurship and prepare them to the exact needs of the labor market.

- Inviting entrepreneurs and professionals to share their expertise in the different EET programs offered.

To sum up our recommendations, we believe that BUSINESSMED and its various partners should build on the previous notes and work on creating a clear roadmap for young entrepreneurs, easing their journeys and assisting them in succeeding in this difficult endeavor. The aforementioned roadmap will provide concrete support and guidance for the implementation of a series of actions to promote youth and women's entrepreneurship in the various target countries, as well as to expand the reach of its activities and results fostering youth entrepreneurship in the region.



10 Pages 105 and 107.

11 • Assess the consequences of ideas that bring value and the effect of entrepreneurial action on the target community, the market, society, and the environment

• Reflect on how sustainable long-term social, cultural, and economic goals are, and the course of action chosen

• Act responsibly

(European Union, 2018b)



## Conclusion

Entrepreneurship can be tied to several pressing global and economic imperatives, ranging from employment creation to poverty reduction and innovation. Given its potential beneficial spillovers, there is an interest in interventions that stimulate individuals' decisions to become successful entrepreneurs. Among these interventions are EET programs that aim to develop mindsets, knowledge, and skills empirically associated with entrepreneurial success. Given that these programs represent a diverse field of interventions, our research has proposed a coherent structure for the EET landscape by recommending a typology of skills to cover based on the gender and location of beneficiaries, as well as key success factors for each scenario.

Despite a global interest in education and training for entrepreneurship, available and reliable information on program outcomes is relatively sparse. However, through an analysis of the current programs' perception in the Mediterranean, this study has been able to offer a focused and structured discussion around what generally characterizes programs when they target young entrepreneurs and are delivered in various contexts. This information is intended to be helpful for practitioners and policymakers conceptualizing the design and implementation of future EET programs.

Using available literature coupled with a qualitative and a quantitative study, our research also examined the challenges facing young entrepreneurs in the EUROMED region in addition to the available incentives and practical solutions to improve the entrepreneurial ecosystem. This data was drawn from specialized reports conducted in the region as well as young Mediterranean entrepreneurs themselves.

Finally, entrepreneurship is a means of dealing with a number of economic realities, such as the economic contributions of self-employment and SMEs, the persistence of unemployment, precarious employment, the emergence of knowledge-driven economies, and the imperative of bringing innovations to market. While EET program evaluations rarely draw hard, causal lines to outcomes that explain how education and training help address these issues, many EET programs appear to contribute by association, whether as a means of generating income for individuals marginalized by an evolving global economic landscape, for whom there may be few immediate alternatives, or by building foundational skills relevant to emerging knowledge-based sectors (Valerio et al., 2014). In either case, our research shows that viewing EET programs as a one-dimensional, silver bullet solution is pointless and should be paired with other solutions (policy, developing specific platforms, etc.) because the global landscape of youth entrepreneurship is complex and heterogeneous.

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