

Community-led enterprises: Empowering Future Entrepreneurs to Drive Transformation

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Abstract

Community-led enterprises (CLEs) represent a distinct business model that blends economic activity with a strong emphasis on social benefit. At their core, CLEs are independent organisations with a dual focus. They engage in continuous production of goods or services, functioning much like traditional businesses. However, the primary beneficiaries of this economic activity are the local community members. Acknowledging the importance of CLEs, little is known about the current situation of such enterprises in different EU countries and how to encourage younger generation to establish such type of business. The current paper tries to narrow the mentioned gaps. Thus, the aim of the paper is to provide the mapping of innovative models of CLEs and suggest the core ideas on training programs for future entrepreneurs. While doing this, a qualitative research was conducted, including focus groups with various stakeholders in such countries as Spain, Lithuania, Greece, Austria and Belgium.

The results revealed that “CLEs” is difficult to frame. Still, the word “community” needs to be understood more broadly - not only as socially vulnerable groups. According to findings, there are at least two necessary conditions for the creation of CLE. The first condition: understanding the need. Every business must address a specific challenge. The second condition: having the right competencies (such as management, finance, etc.). Often, individuals who understand community needs and wish to initiate a business lack the necessary competencies to feel confident about organizing and handling legal matters in their business. Thus, Universities need to address such gap.

Keywords: community-led enterprises, competencies for entrepreneurs, future entrepreneurs, social sustainability, training.

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