

Furthering Innovative Entrepreneurial Regions in Europe

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FIERE Report (Del. 6.6)

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FIERE Project Report – Executive Summary

This report provides a short summary of the achievements and outputs of the FIERE project over its two-year timeframe. The report sets out the findings of the literature review and details the results of the survey of managers, staff and volunteers of regional organisations in terms of their awareness and take-up of innovative entrepreneurship skills.

The report also describes the development of the pilot innovative entrepreneurship training programme and provides a description of the two associated deliverables, the Trainer Handbook and the Trainee Handbook.

The project report also summarises the workshops held for regional mentors and trainees in the partner countries to test the pilot programme.

Project Objectives

FIERE was a two-year project from January 2014 to December 2015, funded by the European Commission's Grundtvig LLP Programme, that was set up to examine and develop ways to increase entrepreneurial and innovative skills in regional and local organisations – both public and voluntary.

FIERE's objectives were:

- To boost regional organisations' capacities for the socio-economic betterment of their regions, making them more innovative and entrepreneurial;
- To enhance innovative entrepreneurship skill sets within regions' institutional infrastructure;
- To raise the skills of regional organisations so as to assist in developing innovative public-private partnerships to tackle the challenges in employment, economy, climate change, etc.

Project Results and Activities

The project's main results have included:

1. The development of a Europe-wide Innovative entrepreneurship adult education training programme;
2. Best practice case studies and other materials;
3. The development of regional networks of adult education mentors in each FIERE partner region;
4. Provision of pilot workshops to individuals from locally and regionally-based public, community and voluntary organisations in each FIERE partner country.

These results have been achieved through implementation of the following 7 Work Packages (WPs):

WP1 Project Management: This WP aimed to ensure a robust and resource-efficient management of the project. The project kick-off meeting was held on 6th February 2014 in Kilkenny, Ireland. At the meeting operational and financial management issues along with communication and dissemination matters were considered. A detailed work plan with time-scales and deliverables, a financial reporting system and a communication and dissemination plan were agreed upon. During the implementation period, partners met regularly in Steering Committee meetings to review the project progress and development of project deliverables: on 19th and 20th June 2014 in Palermo, (Italy); on 12th and 13th February 2015 in Sofia (Bulgaria); and on 18th and 19th June 2015 in Reykjavik (Iceland). The last Steering Committee meeting took place after the FIERE Final Conference in Cashel (Ireland) on 12th November 2015.

WP2 User Needs Analysis: A literature review was prepared which helped to identify local, community and regional entities to engage with and to develop survey content for the User Needs Analysis of local, community and regional entities *vis-à-vis* education and training with regard to innovation and entrepreneurship. The survey was piloted initially then rolled out fully in each partner region. Using a common methodology, six national reports were prepared and the findings were collated into one composite report. Amongst the 450 respondents from 223 organisations surveyed, resourcefulness, resilience and analytical thinking were the most common skills cited as important for the organization and the individual employee, and also were seen as important skills to be trained in. Moreover, across all regions and sectors the relevance of an entrepreneurial skills training programme was valued very highly. The full composite and national reports of the survey are available at the following link: <http://fiereproject.eu/index.php/reports/>.

WP3 Development of Innovative Entrepreneurship Training Programme: The FIERE partnership has developed an innovative entrepreneurship adult education training programme that reflects the needs of the target groups identified in the User Needs Analysis composite report. Three main modules have been developed as the basis for the training programme:

- 1) Creativity and Innovation;
- 2) Analytical thinking and resourcefulness as ways to identify and satisfy customer/citizens needs;
- 3) Leadership and resilience in order to enhance innovation and more responsive service in public and voluntary sector.

Trainer and Trainee Handbooks, which include summaries of best practice case studies, have been prepared and a network of mentors in each partner country has been set up. The Trainer Handbook contains a Training Delivery Toolkit with practical exercises and training activities, evaluation questionnaires to monitor and evaluate the skills that learners acquire as a result of participation in the training programme, and advice on the practical organisation of FIERE training workshops.

WP4 Best Practice Case Studies: The aim of WP4 was to prepare and disseminate good practice case studies that showcase how regional organisations implemented “innovative” and “entrepreneurial” ways for improving their performance. Good practice cases of innovative and entrepreneurial approaches and initiatives from local and regional organisations were chosen from the six FIERE partner countries. Based on a framework, each partner drafted a case study presenting its goals and objectives, methodologies used, training needs and outcomes, negative results and good practices. The case studies have been analysed by the consortium and have been published on the project’s [website](#). These case studies have also been integrated into the training resources.

WP5 Pilot Actions: Pilot actions have been undertaken in each country to test the innovative entrepreneurship training programme and the associated good practice materials. This has enabled partners to examine innovative approaches to the delivery of innovative entrepreneurship education programmes to the key target groups, public authorities and members of community and voluntary groups. As part of this WP5, the partners have provided innovative entrepreneurship skills training courses to 362 participants coming from public, private and voluntary regional organisations in all six partner countries.

WP 6 Dissemination: One of the aims of the FIERE project was to disseminate project results to policy-makers and to regional stakeholders so as to facilitate the development, provision and uptake of innovative entrepreneurship education in other Member States. A Social Media Action Plan has been prepared and a number of dissemination activities have been undertaken such as a FIERE website www.fiereproject.eu; a FIERE Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/fiereproject>, a twitter account <https://twitter.com/fiereproject>, a project leaflet, four project newsletters, press releases, publicity workshops to increase interest in innovative entrepreneurship skills and the final international conference, that took place in Ireland in November 2015.

WP 7 Evaluation/Quality Assurance: A FIERE Quality Assurance Plan was prepared at the beginning of the project. It has ensured a high level of project performance and outputs. External evaluators were appointed to independently carry out a review of the project. A Collaborative Questionnaire was completed by all partners to assess the operational processes and running of the project. Also, participants in the training workshops were asked for their opinions. From the evaluator’s report it can be seen that the partnership has worked efficiently, notwithstanding initial delays. Moreover, the evaluation of the FIERE pilot training courses has shown that participants, overall, were very satisfied with the contents and the delivery of the innovative entrepreneurship skills training programme.

Key Project Deliverables

The following table provides an overview of the main project deliverables that have been published and that are available for download on the project's website www.fiereproject.eu:

Extract of published deliverables on FIERE's website	Language
Innovative Entrepreneurship Literature Review	EN + summaries in BG/PT/IS/IT/EL
Composite and National Reports on users' innovative entrepreneurship skills	EN + summaries in BG/PT/IS/IT/EL
Learners' Handbook	EN/BG/PT/IS/IT/EL
Instructors' Handbook	EN/BG/PT/IS/IT/EL
Best Practice Innovative Entrepreneurship Skills Case Studies	EN + summaries in BG/PT/IS/IT/EL

Project's Impact

During its two-year timeframe, the project has reached several target groups and stakeholders. For example, through our WP2 activity (Target group user needs analysis), 450 respondents from 223 organisations were surveyed in the six partner regions. Target groups included: senior managers, regional policy planners and employees, administrators, staff and volunteers of community and voluntary organisations, and chambers of commerce staff.

Moreover, a wider target group of stakeholders has been reached through our several dissemination channels (as described above), reaching approximately 143,898 persons throughout Europe in just one year.¹ These stakeholders included: higher education institutions, private sector training providers, teachers, entrepreneurs, municipalities, enterprises, individuals and public organisations.

Also the pilot actions (WP5) with their training activities have reached outstanding numbers in the European adult education sphere. Across the six regions, 362 people have taken part in the pilot training and have increased their skills in terms of knowledge of creative and innovative approaches, analytical thinking and resourcefulness, and leadership and resilience.

Furthermore, a network of mentors in each FIERE region has also been established to assist in furthering the implementation of the innovative entrepreneurship skills training programme after the project's end.

Thanks to these activities, regional organisations have already started to apply entrepreneurship skills in their everyday work and to stimulate growth at a local and regional level.

¹ See FIERE, 1st Dissemination Report, p. 40.
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Future Plans and Project's Sustainability

EU and national Member States' policies have a shared interest in the development of innovative and entrepreneurial regions. The FIERE project has a significant European added value dimension. It aims to provide education in innovative entrepreneurship skills to regionally-based organisations so that they can be both innovative and entrepreneurial in the economic and social development of their regions. With its focus on providing innovative entrepreneurship training programmes to community and voluntary organisations, the FIERE project aims to assist a bottom-up approach to regional development and thereby contribute to more competitive regions. The project will also help regional development agencies to develop the capability and skill sets to develop more effective top-down regional policies.

The results of the FIERE project will have an added value in reducing regional policy development fragmentation.

FIERE project partners are integrating the results of the project in their future business plans. They have also started to further disseminate project results through their local networks, cooperation with regional institutions and dissemination channels. FIERE partners will also utilise the network of adult education mentors in all six partner Member States to promote the update of innovative entrepreneurship education in their respective regions. Also the project's deliverables, including all training material, will remain available on the project's website for free download following its conclusion.