

# ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION. OVERVIEW OF THE REAL CONVERGENCE BETWEEN ROMANIA AND THE EU MEMBER STATES

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**Abstract:** *Entrepreneurial education is considered one of the most important sources for encouraging entrepreneurship and promoting entrepreneurial behaviors among young people. The objective of this paper is to provide an overview of the convergence of policies and strategies for the promotion and development of entrepreneurial education in Romania and the member states of the European Union. The convergence between Romania and the European Union in terms of the development of entrepreneurship education was analyzed by comparing the relevant elements for the promotion and development of entrepreneurship education in Romania with a series of aspects that emerge from the strategies and documents adopted at the level of the European Union and the member states. The conclusions of the study indicate that Western European countries are more interested in the development of educational programs capable of developing the skills necessary for an active business environment.*

**Keywords:** *entrepreneurial education, convergence, strategy, Romania, European Union member states*

**JEL classification:** *I25, M10.*

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## 1. Introduction

Entrepreneurial education represents a priority component on the agenda of the European Union, being considered one of the important sources for economic development and competitive advantage, social inclusion, professional insertion, local and regional sustainable development. Entrepreneurship training is essential for European citizens, young people in particular, to develop their entrepreneurial spirit and consider this activity as a professional option. Entrepreneurship education is not limited to the educational program that provides information related to the establishment and development of a business, but also includes the creation of an entrepreneurial culture and climate that motivates subjects to become entrepreneurs. Through its institutions, the European Union supports the development of entrepreneurial education, encouraging the member states to promote, at the level of the education and training system, creative ways of learning and teaching through which to develop the skills, spirit and entrepreneurial behavior of European citizens.

At the level of the European Union, entrepreneurship education is identified in the Strategy for sustainable economic growth “Europe 2020” as one of the most important sources for sustainable local and regional development (European Commission, 2010). On the basis of this strategy, the “Entrepreneurship 2020” Action Plan was developed, within which the importance of education in the field of entrepreneurship for the training of new generations of entrepreneurs by promoting a stronger culture of innovation and sustainable entrepreneurship, is reiterated, urging member states to intensify the stimulation of entrepreneurial behavior among citizens, young people in particular, through different and creative forms of education. It is specified in this framework that “all students should have access to entrepreneurship education, which should be made available to all types of education and at all levels” (European Commission, 2013). It is a vast agenda, carried out over several years, which requires sustained efforts by government decision-makers from the member countries, but also the

active involvement of institutions from the education system, NGOs, associations, unions, citizens.

Focused on this topic, the paper aims to highlight the role of education in the development of entrepreneurial skills, underlining the significant aspects related to the convergence of policies and strategies for the promotion and support of entrepreneurial education in Romania and the member states of the European Union. In the comparative context of the member countries, this research also wants to draw attention to the differences between the countries of the E.U. regarding the implementation of specific policies and strategies regarding the development of entrepreneurial skills at all levels of education and training.

## **2. Literature review**

The entrepreneurship is a key component for smart economic growth and sustainable prosperity of the European Union. Training in the entrepreneurial field is essential for young people in particular to develop their entrepreneurial spirit and consider this activity as a professional option. Entrepreneurship education is a learning process that provides young people with the knowledge and skills needed to be entrepreneurial by setting up their own businesses or through other forms of entrepreneurial spirit in different work and life contexts (Wilson, 2008). Recent studies (Ratten & Jones 2021; Ndou, 2021) identify an increase in interest in entrepreneurship education and an additional need for entrepreneurial knowledge and skills in the post-pandemic stage. This need will be increased even for individuals who do not intend to start a business due to the potential of entrepreneurship education to develop a creative way of thinking in solving problems and a positive mindset in dealing with the increasingly complex challenges of the world in which we live.

Numerous scientific evidence supports the benefits of entrepreneurship education (Liguori & Winkler 2020; Secundo et al. 2021), being recognized on large scale as essential to provide the knowledge and skills needed to identify, establish, manage and develop business opportunities.

Entrepreneurship education has the role of making young people more responsible in addressing the current economic and social challenges, stimulating their creativity and innovative ability to solve problems (Ndou, 2021). An impressive flow of studies in this field (Sánchez, 2011, Dragomir&Mihai, 2021; Zahari et al., 2018; Nowinski et al., 2019) show that young people who participate in entrepreneurship education are more likely to identify opportunities and transform their ideas into action by starting their own business, overcome the fear of failure and be more innovative compared to those who have not followed any form of entrepreneurial training. In the opinion of specialists (Byers et al. 2011), entrepreneurial education is more than necessary, being intended to inspire and encourage future generations to develop an entrepreneurial mentality essential for them the ability to act and to contribute to the sustainable development of the areas where they live and work. Similarly, the results of surveys carried out at the level of the E.U (Flash Eurobarometer 354/2012, Flash Eurobarometer no 478/2019) clearly shows that entrepreneurial education contributes to a deeper understanding of the economy and businesses and, implicitly, to a better adaptation of young people to the dynamics of the labor market.

### **3. Scope and methodology**

The objective of this paper is to analyze the real convergence between Romania and the EU states in terms of policies and strategies for the promotion and development of entrepreneurial education and to draw attention to the differences that exist at the level of the member countries.

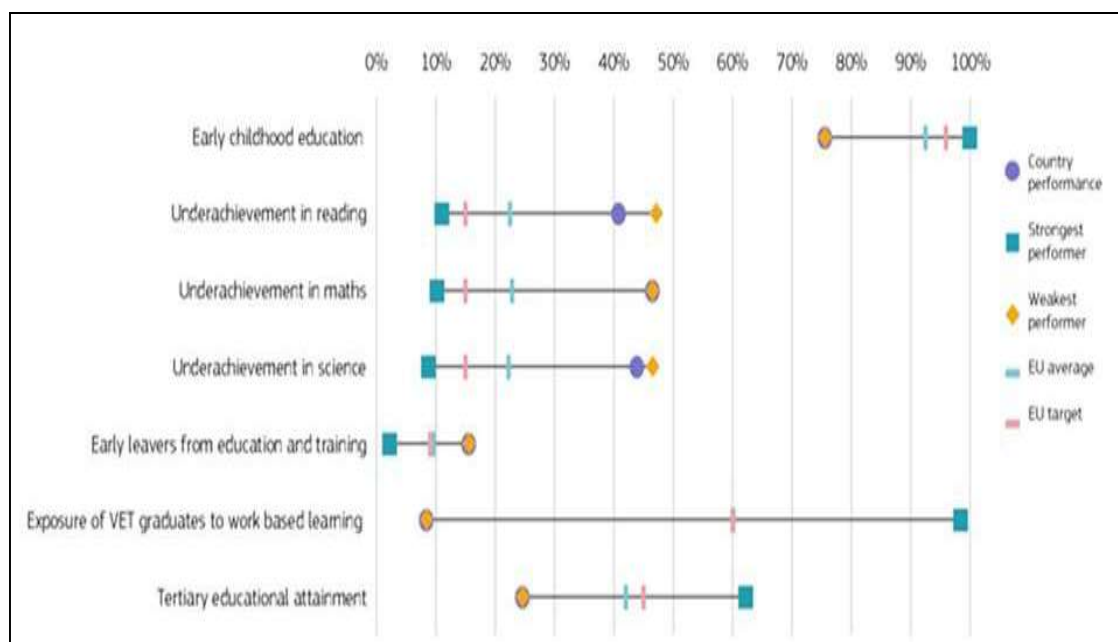
The methodology used in the research is based on a synthesis of studies and reports on the policies and strategies of the European Union in the field of entrepreneurship education and on direct observations from educational practice. The data provides an extensive exploration of the attitudes and opinions of young Europeans regarding the European

Union's priorities in supporting Member States' efforts and initiatives for the development of entrepreneurship education.

## 4. Results and discussion

### 4.1. Romania's performance at all levels of education

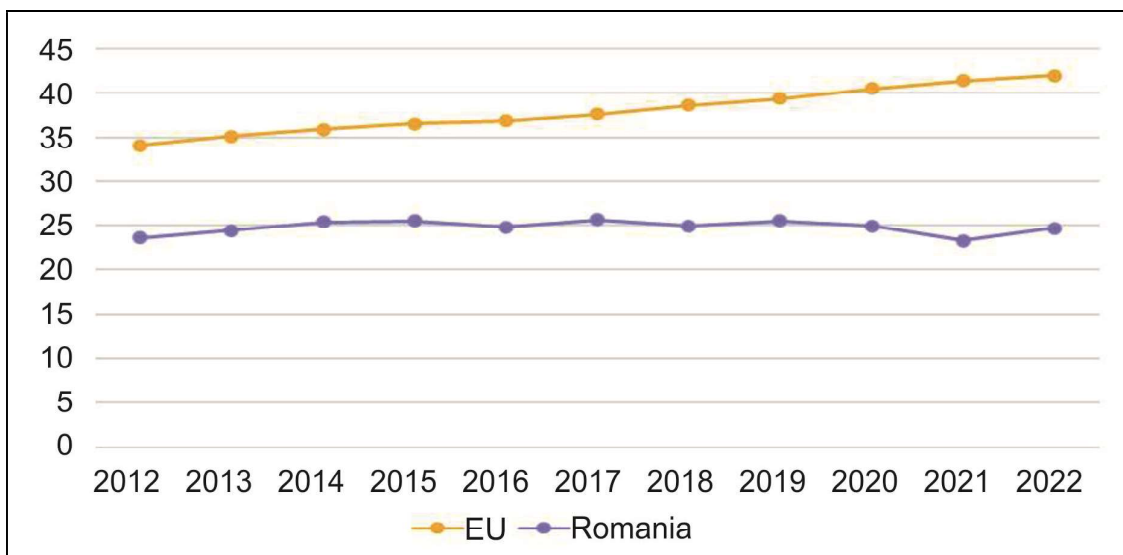
One of the most in-demand skills in the future will be high learning ability. This need will be increased to develop among young people a creative way of thinking in solving problems and a positive mindset in addressing the increasingly complex challenges of society. Without denying the progress made by Romania in the field of education, it must be supported by concrete policies, strategies and actions regarding allocated resources, partnerships, curriculum, teacher training, teaching methods. Evaluation of our country's performance at all levels of education compared to the EU member countries confirms that we are still in a developing area (figure 1).



**Fig. 1.** Position in relation to strongest and weakest performers

Source: DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, based on data from Eurostat (2021, 2022) and OECD (PISA 2018)

Education, at all its levels, has an important role in acquiring knowledge, skills and entrepreneurial spirit and promoting a culture favorable to private initiatives. Universities have a key role in the process of social change and development and should therefore be crucially involved in entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship education in higher education has the greatest impact on entrepreneurship, considering that most entrepreneurs are college graduates, and fundamental entrepreneurial and managerial knowledge can best be developed at this stage. At the level of higher education, the tertiary educational attainment rate (ISCED 5-8) in Romania in the period 2012-2022 is lower than that in the European Union (fig. 2).



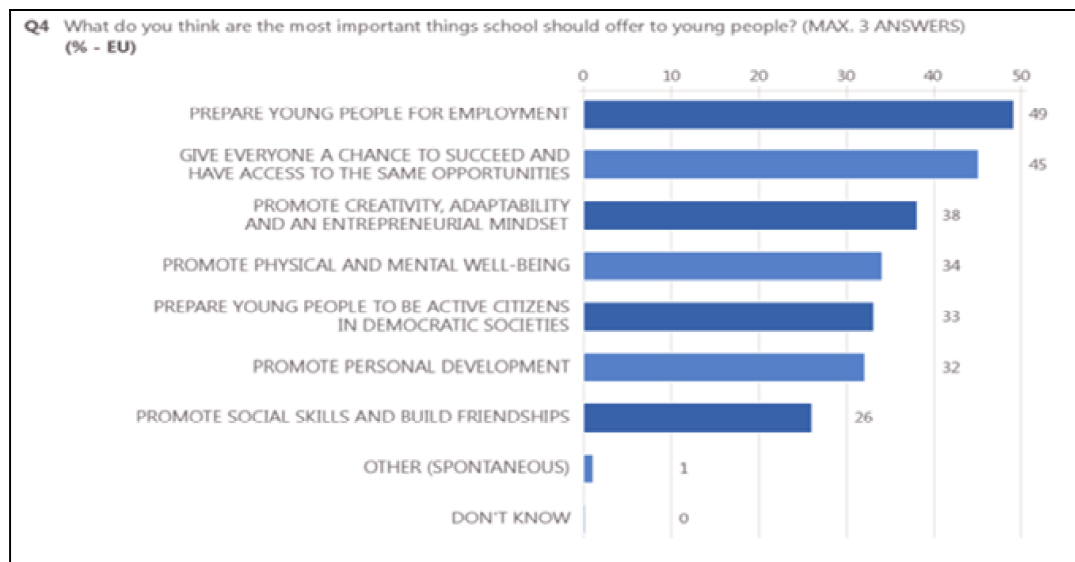
**Fig. 2.** *Tertiary educational attainment rate (ISCED 5-8) in Romania in the period 2012-2022*

Source: Eurostat, Education and Training Monitor, 2023

#### ***4.2. Young people's expectations regarding entrepreneurial education***

The interest of young people in acquiring entrepreneurial knowledge and skills is confirmed in the specialized literature (Lloyd-Reason, 2016; Kakouris& Liargovas, 2021) and also revealed by the survey conducted in March-April 2019 at the request of the General Directorate for Education and Culture of the European Commission (Eurobarometer

478/2019). According to the respondents (young people aged 15-30), the most important things that the school must offer are: preparation for the future job (49%), equal chances of access to the same opportunities (45%) and development of entrepreneurial skills (38%). The results are presented in figure 3.

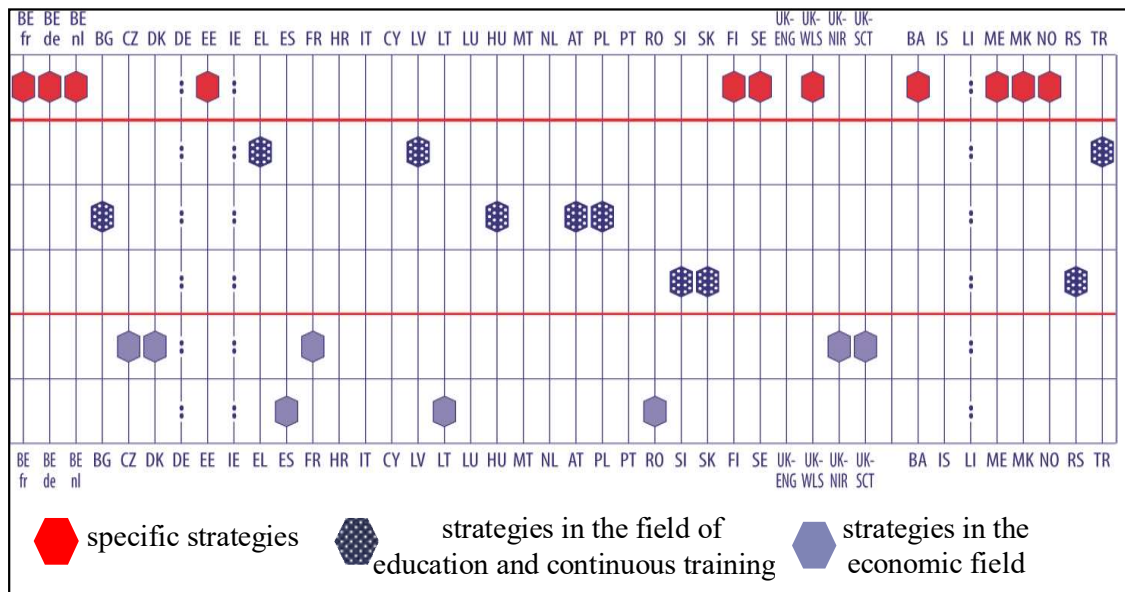


**Fig. 3.** *The views of young Europeans on the most important things that schools should offer*

Source: Analytical Report, Flash Eurobarometer no 478/2019

### ***4.3. The convergence between Romania and the European Union regarding of entrepreneurial education***

The study of the convergence Romania-E.U. regarding the way in which entrepreneurial education is promoted shows nuanced aspects regarding the policies and strategies addressed in the member countries. While many of the member countries have a specific or broader strategy dedicated to entrepreneurship education, Romania does not yet have a specific national strategy for entrepreneurship education. The Eurydice Report (EACEA/Eurydice, 2016) identifies in the member countries several types of strategies that include relevant objectives and actions in the field of entrepreneurship education (figure 4).



*Fig 4. Relevant types of strategies that approach entrepreneurial education in European states (EACEA/Eurydice, 2016)*

The report mentions the following types of strategies:

- specific strategies, focused exclusively on entrepreneurial education;
- general strategies in the field of education, which include objectives and themes aimed at supporting and promoting entrepreneurship education;
- general strategies in the economic field, which include elements regarding the development of entrepreneurship, employment workforce and SMEs.

The countries that developed a specific strategy in the field of entrepreneurial education are those from northern Europe (Norway, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom). They have a broader vision of entrepreneurial education and have targeted in their strategies more comprehensive objectives, actions, themes and programs to support and promoting this field. Other countries have included relevant elements from the field of entrepreneurial education in the general strategies in the fields of education, continuous training and youth (Bulgaria, Greece, Latvia, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Slovenia,



Slovakia, etc.) In these strategies, actions to support entrepreneurial education, improving the culture of innovation and promoting entrepreneurship are highlighted. A smaller number of states have linked entrepreneurship education to innovation strategies (Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Northern Ireland and Scotland). These strategies include a wide range of themes and actions aimed at creating knowledge, skills and increasing the capacity for innovation in business.

Three other countries, including Romania, have included elements that correlate with entrepreneurial education in their economic strategies. From this point of view, we find a greater degree of convergence between Romania, Spain and Lithuania, countries that have included actions to support entrepreneurial education in their economic development strategies. With the elaboration of the National Smart Specialization Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027, a higher degree of convergence is achieved between Romania and the states that include entrepreneurship education as a priority within strategies in the field of innovation by highlighting common values and principles that support the formation a culture of creativity that enhances successful entrepreneurial initiatives.

Analyzing the European and national documents regarding how the priority themes for the development of entrepreneurship education are covered at the strategic approach level, we find an average level of convergence between Romania and the EU member states. At the European level, basic themes have been established for the development and support of entrepreneurial education, such as: curriculum; learning outcomes; practical entrepreneurial experiences; career guidance, teacher training; teaching methods; school networking and exchange of good practices. Most of these are assumed by the states that have adopted specific strategies in the field of entrepreneurial education, reflected in concrete actions to support thematic issues. Strategies in the field of education and educational training and those in the economic field include a smaller number of topics relevant to entrepreneurship education.

A greater degree of convergence between Romania and the EU member states can be signaled in terms of the strategic objectives pursued by

promoting entrepreneurship education. The European Commission mentions in its documents and strategies the following objectives: active citizenship, social entrepreneurship, the creation of enterprises and the capacity for professional insertion. A large number of countries, including Romania, include the four objectives in their national strategies that correlate with entrepreneurship education.

Another important factor for supporting entrepreneurship education is partnerships and the involvement of stakeholders in the development and implementation of strategies aimed at this field (government, business environment, regional authorities, unions). The member countries of EU include different types of partners both in the stage of strategy development, but especially in the stage of its implementation. In many member states there are partnerships with organizations active in the field of promoting entrepreneurial education or with practitioners who disseminate successful entrepreneurial experiences. In Romania, partnerships between educational institutions, the business environment and local communities are most frequently mentioned in most relevant strategies for supporting entrepreneurship education.

From the perspective of the convergence of financing sources, Romania presents similarities with most of the member states of the European Union, which use financing from the national budget and European funds, especially indirect financing through the projects supported by the European Social Fund. Only a few member states (Denmark, France, Austria, Sweden, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands) allocate a separate budget for the implementation of their specific strategies in the field of entrepreneurial education.

## **5. Conclusion**

The convergence between Romania and the European Union regarding entrepreneurship education was analyzed by comparing the relevant elements for the promotion and development of entrepreneurship education in Romania with a series of aspects that emerge from the

policies, strategies and documents adopted at the level of the European Union and the member states. While many of the member countries have a specific or broader strategy dedicated to entrepreneurship education, Romania does not yet have a specific national strategy for entrepreneurship education. Such a strategy should aim at elements that really support the development and implementation of entrepreneurship education and that provide for solid sources of long-term financing, systems for tracking and systematic evaluation of how the objectives are achieved, continuous training of teachers and promotion creative teaching methods.

The main conclusion of the study is that the challenges regarding increasing the degree of real convergence between Romania and advanced European states in the development and implementation of entrepreneurial education still remain. The measures to support entrepreneurship education must be approached in a broader context, supported by policies, strategies and concrete actions regarding allocated resources, partnerships, curriculum, teacher training, teaching methods. This approach to entrepreneurship education aims to encourage young people to develop an entrepreneurial mindset, essential for their ability to act and contribute to the sustainable development of the communities in which they live and work. Romania must act coherently and sustainably to make progress in this field, drawing inspiration from the successful models implemented by EU member states.

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