



ELIE: Employability – Learning through International Entrepreneurship

Progress Report

Public Part

Project information

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Executive Summary

The ELIE project is aimed primarily at those interested in entrepreneurship amongst the general public and also students in higher education, it is particularly useful for people who wish to become entrepreneurs in a country different from that where they were born. In our current economic climate entrepreneurship is an important form of economic development. It employs the entrepreneur, benefits the wider economy and often also employs other people directly and indirectly. This means that learning about entrepreneurship through the ELIE project is also of interest to policy makers and enterprise educators.

The methods of the ELIE project are inclusive and participatory. Using interactive workshops and interviews, coupled with detailed iterative content analysis we are confident that our findings from c200 interviews and 40 case studies are robust and consistent. We have captured the lived experience of immigrant entrepreneurs in order to synthesise key features of their experiences into learning frameworks for entrepreneurship. This report details the approaches used and results of the ELIE project in its first year and sets out how the next part of the project will be developed.

Our key objectives are to capture and synthesise the experience of immigrant entrepreneurs to help those interested in entrepreneurship as students, as immigrants, as educators or policymakers to identify important factors that support people in developing their own business. Other objectives are to provide advice on cultural, structural and social factors supporting entrepreneurs to help those interested in entrepreneurship identify where support and advice is needed. Our development of a new system of categorising entrepreneurship also helps fulfil our objective to provide useable resources for educators and policymakers in helping potential entrepreneurs fit their skills to new markets.

This report also details how the co-creation of the learning framework will be managed between higher education institutions and the small-medium enterprises involved in the ELIE project. Finally the report details the dissemination and valorisation efforts that have already taken place and puts in place a timetable of milestones for the coming year.

Our project team has a wide range of expertise and our participatory approach has allowed ELIE participants to bring their skills and experience to the project in a proactive way. Our project includes SMEs and business and industry umbrella organisations, allowing us to access a diverse range of practical knowledge. We have academics from diverse backgrounds bringing true multi-disciplinarity to the team and we have strong expertise in project management ensuring objectives and deliverables are met and are of high quality. Many of our outputs and deliverables can be seen on our project website (www.elie-proejct.eu). The outputs include a short report for policy makers, a report on Work-package one, and a Case Study Report. The website contains shorter case study highlights of interest to the general public, biographies of some of our entrepreneurs and more general information on the project.

The most exciting aspect of ELIE is that the project has led to new knowledge of the barriers facing some groups of people in developing their potential to become entrepreneurial. The ELIE team have been able to identify a potential way forward and plan to develop a new project that will build on our many achievements in ELIE.

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1. Project Objectives

ELIE's aim is the development and piloting of a learning framework (LEARNING FRAMEWORK) that facilitates Employability and Entrepreneurship in a Cross-Cultural Environment with particular emphasis on providing knowledge and skills sets for SMEs and students in accessible informal and formal settings. In order to ensure the utility of our deliverables we work closely with a wide range of people from SMEs, immigrant groups, students and colleagues across the EU in pursuit of our objectives.

Our objectives provide clear project goals and deliverables that will be transferable across the EU:

- 1) Critically examine the lived-experience of 200 immigrant entrepreneurs to establish the key elements of successful entrepreneurship in a cross-cultural environment
 - a. This objective has been met and summaries of our case studies can be viewed on www.elie-project.eu .
 - b. A report that contains analysis of the lived experience of immigrant entrepreneurs in the participating countries with the recommendations that have gone forward into the development of the learning framework has been produced.
 - c. Conference presentations explaining and exploring our approaches and findings have been made as part of our dissemination activities.
 - i. Employability of Graduates & Higher Education Management Systems WU Vienna University of Economics and Business, Vienna, Austria, 22 & 23 September 2011 **'The Place of Intellectual Capital in Supporting International Entrepreneurship among Young Graduates'**
 - ii. 4th International Conference for Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Regional Development: 5-7 May, Ohrid, Macedonia **'Learning through entrepreneurship: infusing immigrant entrepreneurial knowledge to entrepreneurship education for students and SMEs'**
 - d. Academic articles based upon our findings are currently being written to further develop our dissemination activities
- 2) Work with immigrant-led SMEs in the four partner countries on the establishment of innovative and accessible LEARNING FRAMEWORK that will allow students and SMEs across the EU to benefit from knowledge synthesised from the lived experience of successful cross-cultural entrepreneurs
 - a. We are currently working closely with a number of immigrant-led SMEs who have attended workshops and provide comments and feedback on the ELIE project. These links will continue to be developed as the project progresses.
- 3) Pilot the LEARNING FRAMEWORK with 60 non-immigrant SME participants and 120 students
- 4) Establish what the most significant barriers are to cross-cultural entrepreneurship amongst HE students
- 5) Ensure that the LEARNING FRAMEWORK provides an accessible model for adoption by HE establishments by incorporating this into HE courses allowing students to learn how to better access EU-wide opportunities

6) Develop and sustain an online learning and support resource accessible to SMEs and students across the EU that builds on best practice in e-learning pedagogies

Objectives 2-6 are on-schedule to be completed as per the project plan and will be announced on our web-site, Twitter and Facebook pages as well as leading to a range of dissemination activities detailed in our project plan.

2. Project Approach

ELIE is a partnership between HE, SMEs & SME associations that will increase the relevance of education to the needs of competitive SMEs. Our approach acknowledges the expertise of SME immigrant entrepreneurs and applies that knowledge in an innovative way. The approach supports the objectives of the EU in developing an environment that encourages and facilitates entrepreneurship. Our approach will ensure the utility of our LEARNING FRAMEWORK and associated outputs for the target groups of students, immigrants and existing SMEs wishing to develop cross-cultural capability. The project develops opportunities for cross-cultural exchange of knowledge and makes a direct link between HE & real employment need. ELIE offers means of generating new knowledge and models of successful entrepreneurship fit for a globalized market. ELIE's development of international/cross-cultural awareness, competence and expertise among students, immigrants and SMEs addresses these needs. The project will also equip graduates with competencies that will facilitate entry to the European labour market; facilitating access to all employment markets and improving social cohesion for EU citizens.

There are many innovative dimensions in the approach of the project the most significant of which are:

1. Recognising the value of cross-cultural entrepreneurship in increasing the potential for internationalisation across all SMEs is innovative and will offer opportunities for shared learning that has the potential to both improve partnership working between HE and SMEs and also to break down barriers between immigrant and non-immigrant entrepreneurs.
2. Capturing the lived experience of immigrant entrepreneurs and applying this to the co-creation of a learning framework that is tailored to the needs of SMEs. This strategy will allow HEIs to better reflect how the EU increasingly works. Migration has increased considerably in the last seven years opening up more opportunities for EU citizens to migrate with their business or start a new business in another EU state.
3. Our interactive workshops have been a great success both with participants and in providing new information about aspects of international entrepreneurship that were articulated in our interviews. We have used the KETSO approach (www.ketso.com) to workshop design to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for a wide range of stakeholders and have received really positive feedback from attendees about the process and the value of the workshops to their own development. We will continue to incorporate these workshops as the project progresses.
4. The adoption of an informal and situated learning approach in the context of developing skills in internationalization is innovative. This will enhance the relevance of outputs, and could inform wider attempts to strengthen the linkages between HE and SMEs. Working with students to identify barriers to cross-cultural entrepreneurship is a novel approach and will allow the LEARNING FRAMEWORK to be targeted to addressing the particular needs of HE students while also supporting HE staff with the provision of materials to use in teaching and learning related to cross-cultural entrepreneurship.
5. Our project benefits from both external evaluation and strong internal evaluation with our Polish partners taking on the role of critical friends, while we have also

made use of the expertise of ELIE participants in asking for their informal and formal feedback on activities such as workshops and newsletters

6. The exploitation of partnership outputs (WP7) adopts an open approach that can help in developing our innovative practices elsewhere in the EU. Our website provides an important dissemination route and is regularly maintained. We make use of social media, such as Twitter and Facebook to reach a wider audience. We have made presentations at conferences, produced accessible student newsletters and targeted publications for policymakers and entrepreneurs. In addition the project team are developing a book for enterprise educators based upon the work of ELIE that will be suitable for use across the EU and beyond.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

The most significant achievements of the ELIE project at this interim reporting stage has been the collection of 194 detailed interviews in four countries. These have been analysed for common patterns of experience and then narrowed down to 40 case studies that reflect these commonalities of experience.

Within the ELIE project recruitment of entrepreneurs allowed for the inclusion of any individual who was not paid a wage by an employer but supported themselves through their own labour and initiative to take part in the study as an entrepreneur; the only restriction was that the person had to have been born in a different country to that in which they did business. Within the UK context this posed an additional difficulty in recruitment as many businesses owned by British Asians that were approached to participate were found to be owned by second and third generation British Asians, making this group tend towards under-representation in the sample. In many cases the business had originally been founded by an immigrant but the initial founder had now retired, and even sometimes returned to their country of origin.

As we were also concerned with SMEs, and particularly interested in what might be considered as micro-businesses we did set an upper limit on the number of employees entrepreneurs within the study should have. This was capped at 50 and in all bar one case this stricture was applied. The exception to the rule is included within both the ELIE project and the case studies here because it mirrors exactly the stages that many of our entrepreneurs are at and illustrates neatly a pattern of progression through entrepreneurship that can be taken.

Amongst non-academics there is an interest in entrepreneurship driven in part by successful television shows such as *The Apprentice* and *Dragon's Den* (in the UK). These programmes encourage people to develop a view of successful entrepreneurship that is somewhat stereo-typical. Definitions given at workshops held by the ELIE project, with participants from more than 30 countries, tended towards media-related interpretations of entrepreneurship. They commonly included ideas such as innovator, risk-taker, investor, hero, leader and visionary. This led participants to conclude that entrepreneurs were a different type of person, 'Not like us'. The view that entrepreneurs were different was even held by participants at the entrepreneurs' workshop. The entrepreneur participants were clear that they were in fact running a small business, acting as a consultant, leading a company or social enterprise but that they were not really entrepreneurs. Amongst student participants there was a feeling that entrepreneurship was a difficult goal; they could not aspire to match the talents of Sir Alan Sugar for example.

The term international entrepreneur within the ELIE project has several facets, allowing it to reflect the varieties of entrepreneurial experience. We have worked mainly with people who are entrepreneurs in a country not of their birth. However, we have also included entrepreneurs whose work is international in its scope and a small sample of people whose initial business is based still in the country of their birth but this has expanded into a new country. So for the ELIE project international entrepreneurship relates to i) moving to a new country to live and becoming an

entrepreneur in that country ii) remaining in your country of birth but expanding your business to include overseas bases iii) having an international reach for your business (whether you were born overseas or in the country where the business is based).

The interviewing stage of the ELIE project along with workshops uncovered clear trends in the entrepreneurial life-courses of participants that have enabled five routes into entrepreneurship and eight distinct categories of international entrepreneurship to be developed. Some of these categories are also clearly applicable across entrepreneurship more generally, and offer generalised lessons for those seeking to support or develop entrepreneurship themselves or as a tool for economic growth within a town, city or country. Other categories noted in this research seem to be particularly common amongst immigrant entrepreneurs. It is also the case that some individuals fit across routes and categories and these categories are by no means exhaustive.

Routes into entrepreneurship

- The Reluctant (necessity- driven) Route
- The Work-life Balance Route
- The Investing Route
- The Better-life Route
- The Positive Choice Route

Categories of Entrepreneur

- The Portfolio Entrepreneur
 - Developing a varied business (or multiple micro-businesses) based on a range of skills, knowledge, interests and networks. This type of entrepreneur may combine traditional paid employment with freelance work, consultancy, production and sales of goods. These types of entrepreneur may ultimately develop one element of their business over the others.
- The Social Entrepreneur
 - Not-for-profit community or social enterprises developed by immigrant entrepreneurs sometimes in the service of their own community initially but also to serve the wider community. These include support and advice services, education services and health services.
- The Creative Entrepreneur
 - Music, artistic and other cultural activities/skills used as a basis for a business and includes freelance musicians, public relations, advertising, jewellery design, graphic designers, painters, sculptors, dance teachers, music teachers and similar.
- The Language Entrepreneur

- Business based upon use of language skills and knowledge. Translating, teaching, coaching, setting examinations and owning language schools.
- The Knowledge Entrepreneur
 - Very highly skilled people with professional qualifications such as accountants, architects and lawyers and also people with degrees / higher degrees often working in technical areas such as green technologies, water engineering, design engineering and etc.
- The Skilled Entrepreneur
 - People who use a trade or skill such as furniture making, building, plumbing, carpentry, car mechanics, driving instructor, taxi driving, hairdressing, tailoring as the foundation of their business
- The Ethnic Entrepreneur / Ethnic Food Entrepreneur
 - This group make use of their background as the foundation for a business. There may be an argument for setting ethnic food as a separate category. The types of business within the food category include takeaway food, restaurants, ethnic food supermarkets and wholesalers and importers of ethnic foods. The wider category includes retailers of ethnic clothing such as Islamic dress (for own community), henna artists, ethnic hairdressing, Chinese medicine, martial arts schools,
- The Web-enabled Entrepreneur
 - This group of entrepreneurs could be based anywhere in the world that has good and reasonably priced internet access. They use the internet as their main means of marketing, networking and doing business, often working in several countries. These web-enabled businesses are not restricted to those working in technologies, although these were well-represented within the category. The grouping also includes graphic design, ethnic and consultancy firms

The development and use of this taxonomy of entrepreneurship has been possible because our interviews have revealed many areas of commonality of experience in the four countries taking part in the ELIE project. We feel that an important future project would involve testing this taxonomy more widely within the EU as it has advantages in being easy to understand and apply that may make this a useful tool for governments to use in planning for the support and encouragement of entrepreneurship.

There are a number of concrete outputs from this stage of the project. A short report for policy makers summarises our detailed case study report. In addition there is a report of Work-package one which explores issues such as recruitment of participants, workshops and other practicalities of the project at this interim stage.

Our Case Study report has already been adopted as a core text within entrepreneurship education at the University of Salford Business School and has been published by the University of Salford as a stand-alone report. We have a good web-presence; with all ELIE project outputs available online at www.elie-project.eu and shorter accessible versions of the case studies are available within the site with links to the full case study material and reports. Our student newsletters have attracted direct contact from many students enquiring further about our project and are reaching hundreds of students on a regular basis. We have made two successful conference presentations to academics and have produced a report for policy makers. These results alone are already having significant impact, as can be seen from the use of ELIE materials in entrepreneurship education. However, our report for policymakers will shortly be developed into a brochure about structural barriers to entrepreneurship that will be directly targeted at policymakers level and will enable policy changes to be developed that positively support entrepreneurship. Our student newsletters are leading people to the materials on our website. All of our work within this stage of the project leads directly to the development of our learning materials.

All project results such as Case studies of immigrant entrepreneurs, report on Lived Experiences of Immigrant entrepreneurs and Report for policy makers can be found at ELIE project website www.elie-project.eu along with other information: partners details, links to Participating SMEs, newsletters (including in partner languages), events, project brochure etc.

4. Partnerships

There are four academic partners in the ELIE team: University of Salford, UK; University of Lodz, Poland; University of Turku, Finland and South East European Research Centre (SEERC), Thessaloniki, Greece. The academic team is well-supported by our business partners who are: Chapel Street Business Group, Salford, UK; Thessaloniki Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Greece and Ardin Software, Finland. Within the ELIE project it is very important to have the valuable input of entrepreneurs themselves. Working through umbrella organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce gives the ELIE team access to large numbers of entrepreneurs who can input valuable knowledge and understanding of the experience of entrepreneurs to the ELIE project. Details of our partners can be found on the ELIE website.

A striking feature of the ELIE project has been the strength of the partnership and thus far the smooth running of the partnership. We have worked together extremely well as a team; sharing ideas and expertise as equals striving for the same goal. Within the ELIE team great credit must go to our project manager who has ensured, that information is shared, deadlines are set and kept and any potential issues are resolved promptly and with equitable solutions. Additionally University of Salford Monitoring team has provided invaluable expertise ensuring smooth financial management of this project.

Our team has benefitted greatly from the breadth of expertise amongst members and this led to an early conference presentation based upon ELIE at the 4th International Conference for Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Regional Development: 5-7 May, Ohrid, Macedonia ‘**Learning through entrepreneurship: infusing immigrant entrepreneurial knowledge to entrepreneurship education for students and SMEs**’ with P. H. Ketikidis, L. Lazuras, A. Solomon and C. Downs to be followed by a publication ‘**Learning through entrepreneurship: infusing immigrant entrepreneurial knowledge to entrepreneurship education for students and SMEs**’ in *International Journal of Innovation and Regional Development*.

We have followed this up with a second conference(the Employability of Graduates & Higher Education Management Systems) presentation that took place at WU Vienna University of Economics and Business, Vienna, Austria, 22 & 23 September 2011. Our paper is ‘The Place of Intellectual Capital in Supporting International Entrepreneurship among Young Graduates’. This is part of another Erasmus Lifelong Learning-funded initiative, Network for the Development of Higher Education Management Systems (DEHEMS) and will show how the ELIE project links into entrepreneurship education for students in HE across the EU. Our partnership is well-placed to develop the new knowledge provided by the ELIE project and incorporate it into teaching and learning for students. We will disseminate our new approaches via conferences and publications to ensure the best value for the EU investment in ELIE. Our dissemination strategy for non-academic users is already going well. We have produced student newsletters and a brochure for SMEs with other dissemination activities already in an advanced stage of planning, led by our Greek partners.

Our partnership is well-monitored and evaluated, with this work led by our Polish partners and this process allows the project team to evaluate the quality of the partnership continuously and was any issues to arise to act swiftly to rectify matters.

5. Plans for the Future

The development of our Learning Framework is critical both in the short-term and to the longer-term impact of ELIE. We are taking every possible step to ensure that this will be an effective, innovative, accessible and useful resource across the EU. In order to bring this stage of the project to successful completion we are reviewing a range of projects that provide learning materials in order to learn from the best of these. We have a clear plan of action based upon the development of a tri-partite learning framework (for entrepreneurs, students and academics) that will incorporate features popular with social media alongside more traditional approaches.

In addition to the development and subsequent pilot of the learning framework we have a wide range of dissemination activities planned to ensure the widest possible audience.

The ELIE partnership plans to develop a new project – ELIEmental – which will expand the ELIE partnership, working with a broader range of non-academic partners to develop entrepreneurial skills amongst hard-to-reach groups.

6. Contribution to EU policies

The EU sees supporting the 23million SMEs within the EU as important for growth, integration, innovation and employment. These are areas that ELIE has noted within its case studies. The companies within ELIE include those working with cutting-edge technologies alongside social enterprises that support community cohesion and many examples of companies growing in size as the entrepreneurs leading them develop their markets. The EU-wide Small Business Act for Europe sets out four key areas that the EU supports: at the heart of the policy is 'Think Small First' which aims to ensure regulations do not burden small business unnecessarily. ELIE has discovered a range of issues relating to regulation that impact on the ability to immigrant entrepreneurs and is developing innovative advice and guidance that will assist the EU in meeting its objectives to 'Think Small First', our brochure for policy makers will provide details of this.

The SBA for Europe also seeks to encourage entrepreneurship through encouraging individuals to start up their own company. ELIE is central to this aspect of EU policy. Our learning framework and associated advice, support and guidance materials will be available for use in informal settings. They will offer people who may not have considered entrepreneurship as something they could do the chance to work through the various options available to them in an accessible and informative way. We believe that ELIE will become a useful tool within the EU for educators, business groups and potential entrepreneurs seeking to encourage and facilitate entrepreneurship.

ELIE also contributes to the 'Cooperation between Higher Education and Enterprises' sub action of the Erasmus Multilateral Projects Action. 200 immigrant-led entrepreneurs are taking part directly in the project while at least another 500 SMEs will receive information about the ELIE project and how it can help them to develop cross-cultural potential, giving them the opportunity to use the LEARNING FRAMEWORK as a tool to improve their business model.

