BRIDGING THE GAP

"…Bridging the Gap project will transfer and adapt an innovative methodology of training and developing entrepreneurs…"

Bridging the Gap (BTG)   project development

The research being conducted by each of the six partners (UK, Bulgaria, Greece, Spain and the Netherlands) within the last five months has contributed towards the understanding of the existing entrepreneurial support systems and the identification of the needs in this sector.

Project management results.

The aim of our first efforts on BTG Model has been the full understanding of the characteristics and the cross-EU country variety of the micro-entrepreneurial ecosystem, as the foundation for the Transfer of Innovation BTG Model. Another aim has been to comprehend what and how it needs to be adapted in order to meet the requirements established in the State of Art within the Training Need Analysis (TNA].

Within the baselines of data collecting and data comparing methodology, each partner through interviews, coaching and pilot testing, surveys, database construction, newsletters, interim periodical reports and interactive sharing of information and networking proved to be aware of the national issue, objections, policies and systems that

exist in their own country   in relation to developing entrepreneurs and establishing new enterprises.

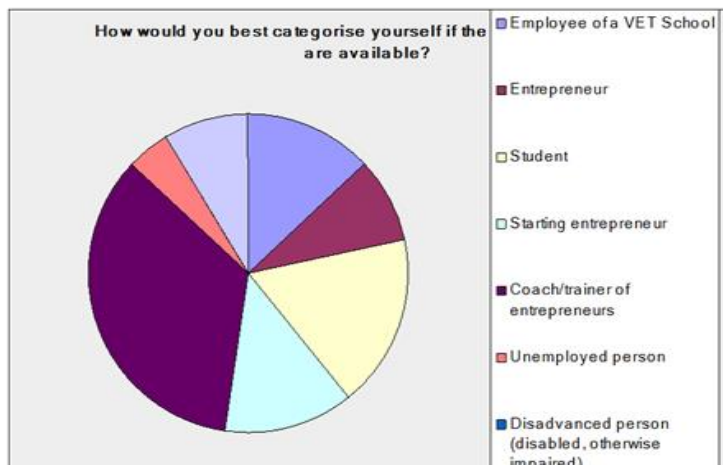## The State of Art of entrepreneurship needs, training and support

In order to attain the State of Art perspective, a primary field research of two questionnaires took place.

The first questionnaire was online and every partner country received at least 20 respondents. The online questionnaire, mainly consisting of closed questions with the option of comments, was easily accessible for the respondents and thus took the form of a greater sample size.

Secondly, semi-structured interview questions were used by each partner into specific target groups, in order to get a better insight of them. Open-questions were asked in order to stimulate the interviewee to answer in a more insightful and comprehensive way. This enabled to receive an in depth view of the current situation and let the respondent suggest ideas and other solutions themselves.

Target groups within the borders of each country have been distributed as follows:

How would you best categorise yourself if the are available?

- Employee of a VET School
- Entrepreneur
- Student
- Starting entrepreneur
- Coach/trainer of entrepreneurs
- Unemployed person
- Disadvanced person (disabled, otherwise impaired)

Piloting and Testing of the Model

The BTG Model has been spread for more than 60 entrepreneurs in each country in the pilot testing phase using in-depth interviews, real-time personalized coaching and online questionnaires as a data collection technique.

Within their national borders, the interviewees argued that the BTG Model:

  ➢ is **challenging** because it considers all aspects which entrepreneurs should know, about business creation and its operation for a long-run lifecycle.
  ➢ is very **attractive** for new start-up companies, because it guides them step by step and minimizes the risks related to business. Therefore, all of its drafted four "journeys" fill the gap of business management and they can be applied in an easy and flexible way to all the targets of the people.
  ➢ is **useful** even to persons who are familiar with basic business or entrepreneur formation and operation and to those who have already a capital fund with a low risk.
  ➢ with some changes, it **could be adopted** in a local, regional and national level. These adjustments might regard specific aspects of the national policies on taxation, fiscal system, company law etc.
  ➢ it **should be adapted** to the needs of specific sectors- such as tourism. Seasonal entrepreneurs have to deal with a shorter life cycle, so the

modified BTG could help this kind of sector which is a growth wheel for national economies.

Dissemination plan and act.

According to the dissemination BTG strategy, the framework has been set so as to balance a sufficiently central designed methodological approach (of the Bridge Model) with the necessary communication and coordination among the six (6) partners (the UK, Spain, Greece, the Netherlands and Bulgaria) (i) to ensure that the activities complement each other and (ii) to record the activities that have been performed.

So far, a coherent, interactive, on-going communication between the parties via e-mail, engages all the actors into informational supply. The result of this synergy has been composed by the dissemination working documents, such as interim reports, contact lists, newsletters, a database (of business incubators, vet trainers, employability centres, European networks, start-ups, external stakeholders) and partners' websites updated with the first spotlight of the BTG project development.

Preparation, Adaptation and Transfer

All the partners involved in the BTG project, after having a comprehensive understanding of the Bridge Model, produced their consultation reports based on national criteria.

The matching of theory and practice towards the innovative transfer of the Model to the real entrepreneurial world will be the by-product of the 2nd meeting of the Consortium in Madrid, 21st-23rd of May 2014.

BRIDGING TO THE **FUTURE**	BTF is an incubator for social enterprises and SMEs. It offers all the necessary support to individuals or groups who wish to start a business or a social enterprise, or a community project. It delivers training to many different groups and has coached disadvantaged people extensively, in order to cut dependency and develop their aspirations and abilities so they may create/find employment.
Merseyside Expanding Horizons	MEH is an established VCS infrastructure organization, working in the field of social inclusion on Merseyside. It is a key stakeholder and influential support body in the VCS and has an excellent track record of delivering innovative and successful programmes through partnership, including projects supporting disadvantaged individuals into training and self- employment.
ACADEMY OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP®	Academy of Entrepreneurship (AKEP) is a non-for-profit organization recognized Greek training structure. It acts in collaboration with the Federation of Hellenic Associations of Young Entrepreneurs aiming to contribute to the creation of a healthy business environment for the development of entrepreneurship in Greece and in Europe, as well as the proper conditions for entrepreneurship to support young entrepreneurs in their business goals and plans in the long run.
BUSINESS INCUBATOR - GOTSE DELCHEV	The Business Incubator-Gotse Delchev Entrepreneurship Promotion Centre (BI-GD) works towards encouraging local economic and human resources development. Its main objective is to support start-ups and SMEs within the Gotse Delchev region by providing them with high quality business services: information, consultancy, trainings and support in micro-financing.
everis *attitude makes the difference*	Everis is a multinational consulting company, focused on offering comprehensive business solutions to its clients, meeting all points of view in the value chain, from business strategy to system roll-out. It identifies start-ups, supports the entrepreneurs and accelerates their growth. As a part of its ongoing work, Everis is in contact with enterprises in every industry, and within the public sector.
BDF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT FRIESLAND	Business Development Friesland (BDF) develops and executes projects focused on the growth of the SMEs, as well as the increase and sharing of knowledge. It participates in key start-up programs and has fostered a regional network to become a specialist on start-ups in the Province of Friesland. BDF supports the starting companies to establish their business and to help them maximize their growth over a maximum period of three years. This includes coaching, business training, guidance and a 'connecting-the-dots' networking role.