

Entrepreneurship Environments

Inspiring a de novo research agenda



Rationale

The intention of this pilot study is to develop a more comprehensive overview of enterprise and entrepreneurship across Europe. Currently we are looking to establish strategic research links with a small consortium of academic partners at institutions around a series proposed research projects, some of which are outlined below. Central to the first phase is establishing a common framework for the consortium on which to develop the research agenda and proposals. As such we are looking to establish a group of 5/6 collaborators which we hope to form the core of our ambition to create new pan-European research cluster in enterprise and entrepreneurship.

With existing sponsorship we are able to fund this preliminary research to explore the possibilities of developing further proposals. Using a combination of telephone and web based surveys we are initially looking to work with a consortium of 5/6 academics/researchers to build a profile of 50 responses from each country. The short surveys are intended to identify the geographical and entrepreneurial dynamics of ICT firms (SMEs), to provide a series of case studies. The survey seeks to analyse policy factors which influence and affect entrepreneurship at both an EU and national level, and the dynamics between the two. On the back of the survey we are considering a small number of follow-up interviews which we would look to include partners with if possible to consolidate data and identify specific themes from which to develop subsequent research agendas of common interest.

Dissemination

We wish for the findings of this initial research survey to reach as wide an audience as possible, and intend to work with the academics involved as part of an extended dissemination strategy. The plans include:

- Academic partners will be able to publish academic articles based on the information they themselves have generated – though at all times the project leaders must be acknowledged in any publications. The project leaders are willing to help in the co-authoring of articles based on this data if the researcher wishes for assistance in publishing in English language journals.
- Academic partners will be invited to submit an article, based on their analysis of the country data they generated, for a special issue of the journal *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, to be published in 2008/9.
- The project leaders are currently negotiating a contract with Ashgate Publishers for an edited book arising out of the research. Academic partners will be invited to submit a chapter based on their research, to analyse the data collected and incorporate other relevant areas of their own research. The project leaders will write introductory, theoretical and concluding chapters bringing the case studies together.

Therefore each of the academic partners should be able to obtain at least three publications from the data they generate. Furthermore,

- The project leaders will put together a panel based around the project for the Royal Geographical Society/Institute of British Geographers 2008 annual conference, of which academic partners will be invited to present and take part in the panel. No funding is currently available to pay expenses but the project leaders will be applying to various sources to support the presenters including the European Research Council.
- A project website will be set up where researchers can post working papers and discussion pieces.
- Researchers will be named in the project report written for non-academic users and any policy papers written for the European Union/national governments.

Future projects

One of the aims of this pilot project is to provide the impetus for larger research projects. Applications for further funding will include;

- The data collected will form the basis of an European Union Framework 7 project. This would be a large scale project which would look at entrepreneurship in a number of sectors, as well as further exploring the IT sector, and the development of technology transfers from the university sector. The project will last for several years and would explore these issues at local/regional levels as well as national issues and would employ both quantitative and qualitative research methods.
- Academic partners involved in the pilot project will be invited to be involved in the FP7 application from the proposal writing stage and, if the bid is funded, would be able to be involved in the research. If the researcher wishes they would be able to work on the project if the funding bid is successful.
- A similar proposal will also be submitted to the ESRC (the British Government's social science funding body) – again academic partners would be asked to input into this proposal. The project leaders are very interested in developing joint projects where the academic partners would also apply to their governments funding body. The ESRC is very keen to fund joint projects in cooperation with funding bodies from other countries (see <http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/opportunities/international/BilateralAgreements.aspx?ComponentId=12535&SourcePageId=7123> for further details).
- If academic partners wish to make applications to their government funding bodies utilising the findings of this project the project leaders will be happy to provide any assistance needed.

In short we hope this project will prove to be the basis of much larger research agenda which will be of benefit to us all.