



*European Economic and Social Committee  
Employers' Group*

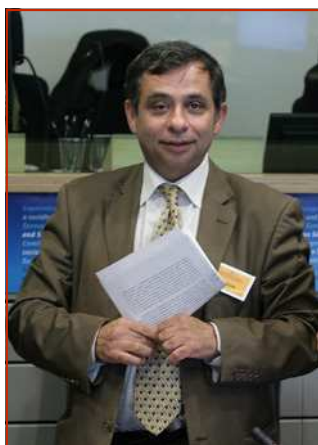
# **Young European Entrepreneurs Information, Innovation and Institutions**

## **How Europe can help business**

**19-20.11.2009**

# **Final Report**





*Henri MALOSSE*



*Brenda KING*



*Eve PÄÄRENDSON*

## Introduction

The Young Entrepreneurs Seminar of November 2009 arose in response to an urgent need whose necessity had only increased in light of the financial crisis; the need to engage young Europeans with the possibilities for entrepreneurship in modern Europe, and to help engender a more positive image for Employers among the European public. Here at the Employers' Group of the EESC, we had observed at first hand the scepticism with which Employers and the concept of entrepreneurship are frequently viewed by young Europeans, and this seminar was therefore initiated in part to address this imbalance. Equally, as 2009 represented the European year for Creation and Innovation, we sought to provide a forum for young entrepreneurs to showcase their innovative and creative skills, which they were able to do in a series of highly productive interactive workshops.

The Seminar sought to address a number of key challenges facing young entrepreneurs as they attempt to forge and continue a successful business. Among the issues to be debated was the question of "How to help European entrepreneurs better communicate with EU institutions?". In seeking to demonstrate how the EU should be a support mechanism and not an obstacle to young Entrepreneurs, we also centred on the theme "How to make the EU work for you?". An emphasis was retained on practicality throughout the seminar, as we addressed the question of "How to set up a European SME", including exchanges on the topics of legislation, funds and networking. Microcredit and access to finance were discussed in depth, as was the subject of how to build links to other foreign SMEs, with the business cultural differences between the EU and Japan serving as an effective case study.

Participants in the event were granted the opportunity to learn from and question an extensive array of keynote speakers. These speakers held a range of backgrounds covering a wide spectrum of the European business sphere, and were able to impart their personal experience to assist the young entrepreneurs in the challenges they currently face. It was intended that the participants would not only acquire an understanding of the workings of the EU, but would also stand to benefit from newly established links with Members of the EESC.

At the heart of our initiative was the desire that young entrepreneurs should come to view the EU internal market as their major playing field; it is imperative that we should develop a generation of young entrepreneurs who regard Europe as their home market, and who harbour a keen awareness of the benefits to be gained from doing business in Europe. The EESC Employers' Group is committed to initiating a new "pro European" and "pro business" culture, as would benefit young entrepreneurs and the wider European population alike. This seminar was a significant step towards implementing this goal, and establishing a trend for the next generation to follow.

### **Henri Malosse**

President of the EESC Employers' Group

### **Brenda King**

Vice-President of the EESC Employers' Group  
in charge of External relations, organisations of events, AICESIS

### **Eve Päärendson**

Vice President of the EESC Employers' Group  
in charge of External relations, contact with target groups

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## Programme

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### Thursday, 19 November 2009

9:30 - 10:00 Registration of participants

10:00 - 12:30 How Europe can help business - An introduction

Opening Address by **Henri Malosse**, President, EESC Employers' Group

**Michal Kadera**, Youth Forum Bureau Member;  
**Luc Hendrickx**, UEAPME Director Enterprise Policy & External Relations;  
**Ben Butters**, EUROCHAMBRES EU Affairs Director;  
**Maria-Fernanda Fau**, BUSINESSEUROPE Communication Department;  
**Julius Witteveen**, EuroCommerce Adviser on SMEs Policy;  
**Jarosław Mulewicz**, EESC Member;  
**Christian Weinberger**, Entrepreneurship and SME policy adviser in  
DG Enterprise and Industry

**Moderator: Brenda King**, Vice President, Employers' Group

12:30 - 14:30 Lunch

14:30 - 18:00 Afternoon session in working groups

### Working Group 1

How do we help European entrepreneurs better communicate with EU institutions?  
(Focus on How to make the EU work for you)

**Pedro Almeida Freire**, EESC Member;  
**Lena Bondue**, NFTE Belgium Director;  
**Birgit Fular**, Employers' Group Head of Unit;  
**Sylvia Gauci**, EESC Member;  
**Michal Kadera**, Czech Business Representation in Brussels.

**Moderator: Brenda King**, Vice President, Employers' Group

### Working Group 2

How to set up a European SME? (legislation, funds, networking)  
(Focus on Microcredit and access to finance)

**Stefanie Lämmermann**, European Microfinance Network;  
**Isabel Poli**, West Sweden EU and Representation Office;  
**Dimitris Tsigos**, YES European Confederation of Young Entrepreneurs BoP;  
**Marta Vojtova**, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Support Office;  
**Maciej Otulak**, DG Enterprise and Industry, Financing Innovation and SMEs;  
**Antonello Pezzini**, EESC Member;  
**David Yormesor**, European Investment Fund.

**Moderator: Madi Sharma**, EESC Member

**Working Group 3**

How to build links to other foreign SMEs?

(Focus on Coping with business culture differences: the case of EU-Japan)

**Arie Vos**, Kitsune Executive Partner;

**Simon Craig Gray**, EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation Deputy Director;

**Dobromir Hristov**, Centre for the Study of Democracy;

**Yuichi Nakayama**, Japanese trainee at the EESC Employers' Group in 2008;

**Francesco Fiore**, AMJ—Tokyo Executive Director.

**Moderator: Eve Päärendson**

19:00 – 22:00    Networking Dinner hosted by Henri Malosse

**Friday, 20 November 2009**

9:30 - 10:00    Registration of participants

10:00 - 12:00

Presentation of Working Groups Results and Final Debate

**Andrea Benassi**, UEAPME Secretary General;

**Stefanie Lämmermann**, European Microfinance Network;

**Henri Malosse**, EESC Employers' Group President;

**Christian Weinberger**, Entrepreneurship and SME policy adviser in DG Enterprise and Industry;

**Sylvia Gauci**, EESC Member;

**Brenda King**, EESC Member;

**Jarosław Mulewicz**, EESC Member;

**Antonello Pezzini**, EESC Member;

**Madi Sharma**, EESC Member.

**Moderator: Eve Päärendson**, Vice President, Employers' Group

12:00 - 12:30    Closing Ceremony

**Henri Malosse**, President, Employers' Group of the EESC

## Conclusions and recommendations

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The following recommendations were drawn up by participants aiming at facilitating business activities and entrepreneurship in Europe.


Europe has many opportunities, top of the list are Talent, Brains and Vision! SME organisations are well established across Europe and could be used as facilitators both in access to knowledge and access to finance. Microcredit facilities are more available in Europe and are valuable for those facing exclusion from the normal means of banking finance (although they do charge higher interest rates).

Tax incentives could be given to large companies to support smaller companies. There is a high level of educated people in Europe – many currently unemployed. The risk aversion could be supported with mentors/coaching and/or training: role models could be found and promoted across Europe to change the image of business and entrepreneurs, for example by going into schools and sharing good and bad learning experiences.

Specific points included:

- I. A new approach to the concept of “young entrepreneurs”; in order to take into account all those who are starting their own business regardless of their age, should be considered. A suggestion of NEW ENTREPRENEURS, those just starting in business and YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS, those of a certain age should be clarified.
- II. A “Right to Fail” culture – out of every disappointment is an opportunity.
- III. A ONE - STOP - SHOP in all Member States for business advice, signposting and access to finance, including an online facility.
- IV. Access to finance for all – a pot of money that would allow people to start a business - risk capital supported with advice and guidance, including as available in some countries already Innovation Vouchers and credits for marketing.
- V. Entrepreneurship education in schools, from primary to life –long learning. There should be a greater focus on entrepreneurship in education, across the curriculum from primary education. Delivering entrepreneurship in higher education may be too late for stimulating the entrepreneurial mindset.



- VI. Given globalisation and differences in business cultures, training is absolutely necessary to create a pool of knowledgeable and skilled workers with the ability to conduct business with international companies effectively. With special focus on key channels, success factors, business manners and communication style.
  - VII. University and institution capacity building of national structures and European structures for young entrepreneurs, and a better promotion of entrepreneurship among young people and society. This could be done through Young Europeans Day / Direct dialogue in the European Institutions: European Commission, European Parliament, European Council and using social media channels.
  - VIII. Specialist programmes focusing on international cooperation and building a network of experts, business promoting organisations and companies is also necessary for European businesses looking to trade internationally.
  - IX. In a fast developing world, training/up-skilling is essential to help people adapt to new needs. This is particularly the case in international trade and business, where different cultures and work environments represent a major challenge. Skills mismatches need to be addressed, and for this, sustained public policies are necessary and can prove successful.
  - X. There is a necessity for a permanent and continuous dialogue addressing the challenges being faced by young and new entrepreneurs . This could be done through a permanent "Forum", through the creation of a Young Entrepreneurs Ambassadors network, and/or a permanent dialogue with the EESC in order to "start speaking the same language".
  - XI. Well functioning internal market.
  - XII. An annual study and research on new and young entrepreneurs by organizations representing young entrepreneurship should be carried out to identify trends and indicators to stimulate the sector.
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## Working Groups



- ✿ **How to help European entrepreneurs better communicate with EU institutions?**
- ✿ **How to set up a European SME? (legislation, funds, networking)**
- ✿ **How to build links to other foreign SMEs?  
Coping with business culture differences:  
the case of EU-Japan**



## Working Group N°. 1

**How to help European entrepreneurs better communicate with EU institutions?**

**(Focus on How to make the EU work for you)**

**Speakers:**

**Pedro Almeida Freire**, EESC Employers' Group

**Lena Bondue**, NFTE Belgium

**Birgit Fular**, Employers' Group Head of Unit

**Sylvia Gauci**, EESC Employers' Group

**Michal Kadera**, Czech Business Representative



**Moderator:**

**Brenda King**, Vice President of the Employers' Group

The working Group reflected on the opportunities and challenges of entrepreneurship in the context of the current crisis. Unfortunately entrepreneurship is not seen often enough as a career option by young people: this is due to a lack of up-to-date research and information, a lack of entrepreneurial education and training and also a need to harmonize practical skills with theory. The issues to be challenged in order to reduce the difficulties faced by young entrepreneurs include the reduction of administrative and fiscal burdens, the lack of internationalization of young entrepreneurs businesses, and the need for more resources into incubation centres.

The participants proposed a new approach to the concept, in order to take into account all those who are starting their own business regardless of their age: they would rather speak of NEW ENTREPRENEURS AND YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS.

They advocated a permanent and continuous dialogue addressing the problems young and new entrepreneurs are facing: with the creation of a Young Entrepreneurs Ambassadors network, and a permanent dialogue with EESC in order to 'start speaking the same language.'

Among the working group recommendations were also the following elements: entrepreneurship in education, institution capacity building of national structures and European structures for young entrepreneurs, better promotion of entrepreneurship among young people and society (Young Europeans Day / Direct dialogue in the European Institutions: European Commission, European Parliament, European Council, using social media channels), and finally a yearly study and research on new and young entrepreneurs by organizations representing young entrepreneurship.



## Working Group N°. 2

**How to set up a European SME? (legislation, funds, networking)  
(Focus on Microcredit and access to finance)**



### Speakers:

**Stefanie Lämmermann**, European Microfinance Network  
**Isabel Poli**, West Sweden EU and Representation Office  
**Dimitris Tsigos**, YES European Confederation of Young Entrepreneurs BoP

**Marta Vojtova**, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Support Office  
**Maciej Otulak**, DG Enterprise and Industry, Financing Innovation and SMEs  
**Antonello Pezzini**, EESC Employers' Group  
**David Yormesor**, European Investment Fund

### Moderator:

**Madi Sharma**, EESC Employers' Group



The 11 participants, all real entrepreneurs, 3 observers from EU business networks and 7 panellists joined in an interactive session to look at the challenges, opportunities and solutions facing start-up and growing businesses.

**Challenge No 1:** Success in Europe is not limited to only entrepreneurs and business. Europe needs to promote a more positive image and culture overall. In terms of business Europe needs to address: image and branding of business and entrepreneurs; fear of starting, stigmatised by the fear of failure; the Risk Averse society – especially the public sector and policy makers; the fact that success is seen as a negative.

**Challenge No 2:** The lack of entrepreneurial learning, innovative teaching, business role models and learning by doing in Education is not creating an environment conducive to business start up – or creating employees with an entrepreneurial mindset, essential for all businesses to grow. Europe should question: Why is entrepreneurship not delivered as part of the educational curriculum 5-105?



**Challenge No 3:** People who have ideas need to access information to develop their businesses and within Europe there are no simple knowledge/information access points. Entrepreneurs would ask Europe to review: information delivery – there are either numerous confusing information centres in certain Member States and none in others. The quality of information and advice varies considerably; start up obstacles – simplified, easily available information on permits, health & safety, tax, employment; lack of expert/skilled mobility to support business management; differing legal regulations between Member States.

**Challenge No 4:** Access to finance – Without the financial crisis access to start up and growth capital for businesses was always an issue ....with the financial crisis SMEs and start up businesses will without doubt be the bottom of the pile for support. The following elements make access to finance an even more serious obstacle to setting up a business today: FAILURE ... be successful before we finance you!; red tape/paperwork to be completed for funding applications; EU funds nightmare – if you can understand the terminology; discriminatory conditions for access to funds which conflict with the business needs and European political and sectoral policies; state aid and the conflict for small business access; developing innovation and research in undercapitalised businesses or those trying to keep their heads above water.

**Challenge No 5:** The red tape and administrative burdens and high costs of dealing with these for small businesses. Particularly in the development of innovation Europe must consider: registration costs of IPR, technical standards and EU certification, especially as many innovations have more than one design; cost of dealing with norms for new product designs and research innovation; normalization and fitting in with current regulations; corruption.

### The Opportunities

After raising the challenges the participants and panellists focussed on the opportunities available in Europe now. On top of the list were Talent, Brains and Vision! They also acknowledged the fact that SME organisations are well established across Europe and could be used as facilitators both in access to knowledge and access to finance. Microcredit facilities are more available in Europe and are valuable for those facing exclusion from the normal means of banking finance (although they do charge higher interest rates). Tax incentives could be given to large companies to support smaller companies. There is a high level of educated people in Europe – many currently unemployed. The risk aversion could be supported with mentors/coaching and/or training: role models could be found and promoted across Europe to change the image of business and entrepreneurs, for example by going into schools and sharing good and bad learning experiences.

Given a magic wand, the participants' **“WISH LIST” for Europe** would be:

1. A “Right to Fail” culture – out of every disappointment is an opportunity.
2. A ONE - STOP - SHOP in all Member States for business advice. signposting and access to finance, including an online facility.
3. Access to finance for all – a pot of money that would allow people to start a business - risk capital supported with advice and guidance, including as available in some countries already Innovation Vouchers and credits for marketing
4. Entrepreneurship education in schools, from primary to life –long learning.
5. Well functioning internal market





## Working Group N°. 3

### How to build links to other foreign SMEs?

(Focus on Coping with business culture differences: the case of EU-Japan)

#### Speakers:

**Arie Vos**, Executive Partner, Kitsune

**Simon Craig Gray**, Deputy Director, EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation

**Dobromir Hristov**, Center for the Study of Democracy

**Yuichi Nakayama**, Japanese trainee at the EESC Employers' Group in 2008, since 2009 working for a trading company in Tokyo

**Francesco Fiore**, Executive Director, AMJ—Tokyo

#### Moderator:

**Eve Päärendson**, Vice President of the Employers' Group

We live in a world of changes and globalisation in which understanding other cultures is crucial for business success. This working group worked on a case study of EU-Japan business culture differences.

Japan remains the world leader for industrial competitiveness, and learning from Japanese business practices can contribute to the improvement of EU competitiveness. The Japanese market represents an enormous potential for European companies as it is a hub for the region that includes China, South Korea and other developing Asian countries; Japanese infrastructure is very well developed and once you establish the economic ties there are benefits on a larger scale as they are very reliable business partners.

The working group studied the differences between the European and the Japanese in terms of culture as well as behaviour, based on the Hofstede theory. Given these differences in business cultures, training is absolutely necessary to create a pool of knowledgeable and skilled workers with the ability to conduct business with Japanese companies effectively. The **EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation** provides support services, training programmes for business managers, exchange programmes for students and researchers and seminars to increase mutual awareness. For more information, please visit: <http://www.eu-japan.eu/global/?profile=global>.

The working group also worked on different success stories of Czech, Belgian or Italian entrepreneurs who got new contracts or expanded their businesses after attending such trainings dedicated to understanding the Japanese market, key channels, success factors, business manners and communication style.

The working group participants recommended establishing a program focused on business differences for international cooperation and building a network of experts, business promoting organisations, companies and educational institutions.

In a fast developing world, training/up-skilling is essential to help people adapt to new needs. This is particularly the case in international trade and business, where different cultures and work environments represent a major challenge. Skills mismatches need to be addressed, and for this, sustained public policies are necessary and can prove successful.





# Closing ceremony







PRESS RELEASE No 151/2009

17 November 2009

## EESC supports Young European Entrepreneurs

**The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) will hold a training seminar for Young Entrepreneurs on information, innovation and institutions and how Europe can help business, which will take place on 19-20 November. As a result, recommendations will be drawn up by participants aiming at facilitating business activities and entrepreneurship in Europe.**

The interactive seminar, organised by the Employers' Group of the EESC, is aimed at building a dialogue between young European entrepreneurs and major EU stakeholders involved in the shaping of the European business environment. Keynote speakers will include representatives from the European Commission, European Investment Bank, main European business organisations and other regional actors.

Twenty-one high level young entrepreneurs will be taking part and have been selected on criteria of geographical balance, occupation, motivation and gender balance. Participants will be coming from all parts of Europe (15 Members States are represented- among which 9 of the "new" Member States) and all show a strong commitment to entrepreneurship and to Europe.

**Mr Henri Malosse**, President of the Employers' Group of the EESC, emphasises, "it is essential to restore the confidence of young entrepreneurs in the EU to support the recovery from the current economic and financial crisis".

Re-energising the Small and medium enterprises (SME) and entrepreneur sector will be one of the key solutions to face the financial crisis and address the social and environmental issues facing the planet. However, many of those Europe is trying to inspire, particularly the young entrepreneurs, often doubt their own abilities or have a lack of understanding of how European institutions can help them. These are some of the issues which will be discussed during the seminar.

The seminar will allow young people to acquire knowledge of the workings of the EU and it will also provide a platform for them to have their voices heard. Participants will be asked to focus on the challenges and opportunities facing young European entrepreneurs. As an outcome, together with the speakers, they will draft concrete recommendations to be presented to business organisations and EU institutions, thereby highlighting potential next steps for business growth within Europe.

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PRESS RELEASE No 154/2009

25 November 2009

## YOUNG EUROPEAN ENTREPRENEUR AMBASSADORS

**Europe needs to give more support to young entrepreneurs by establishing a permanent dialogue with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) launching a network of Young European Entrepreneur Ambassadors, creating a one-stop shop for access to financing and by promoting exports to third countries. These were the main requests formulated by more than 20 young entrepreneurs gathered for a two-day training seminar at the EESC.**

"Europe can help business and stimulate entrepreneurship", noted **Henri Malosse**, President of the Employers' Group hosting the event, adding that young entrepreneurs should get involved in civil debates at the European level.

**Sandra Miegl** founder of Start Vienna, an organisation which helps young entrepreneurs, argued that Europe and Europeans needed to change their attitudes towards success and failure. "In the United States, you have to fail three times to get a credit, whereas in Europe, if you fail once you never get a credit" she added. Everyone should be entitled to a pot of money to start a business, noted EESC member **Madi Sharma**. "But if you cannot have a positive attitude towards success in your own country, how could you have it in Europe?" she wondered.

Vice President of the Employers' Group **Brenda King** felt that both young and new entrepreneurs sometimes failed to understand how the European institutions could help them. **Florin Jianu**, President of the Young Entrepreneur Association from Romania, stated that "When we meet with the EESC, we have the strong feeling that we speak the same language". **Jeanelle Catania** from the Maltese Chamber of Commerce felt that business skills education was a key factor for success.

One key challenge facing European companies was how to export their products outside the EU. "It is not only about learning to adapt your business plan, it is more about approaching a new culture. You have got to look for the invisible", said **Francesco Fiore**, one of the participants in an EU-Japan cooperation programme. **Arie Vos**, trainer in Japanese business manners believed that a lack of legislation coordination inside the EU was also bad for export. "Starting a business can take three days in Germany, up to two years in Cyprus" he added. Vice President of the Employers' Group **Eve Päärendson** wanted to encourage young people to have ambitious dreams, and to come out of their comfort zone to realise them.

The Commission representative picked up on two concrete recommendations made by the participants to better promote entrepreneurship among young people and society: launching a network of Young European Entrepreneur Ambassadors and creating a Young Europeans Day to enable a direct dialogue with EU Institutions. Participants felt that the network should be accessible to all new entrepreneurs regardless their age who are facing the consequences of the current economic crises and challenge to become their own entrepreneurs in order to avoid unemployment.

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