



JOINT REPORT

GREEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP LEARNING GAPS

Go Green

New learning path promoting
green entrepreneurship

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General overview

The countries analyzed have developed various non-formal educational initiatives to promote entrepreneurship, including green entrepreneurship. These initiatives aim to fill gaps in formal education, enhance young people's employability, and encourage sustainable business models. However, the structure, funding, effectiveness, and accessibility of these programs differ significantly across the countries.



Country	Key strengths	Challenges
Bulgaria	Increasing awareness and participation, financial support programs available.	Green entrepreneurship training is inconsistent and lacks continuity.
Hungary	Strong public-private cooperation, EU funding, high participation in digital and in-person initiatives	Regional disparities limit access; green entrepreneurship still in early development.
Ireland	Strong government support for entrepreneurship, well-developed startup ecosystem, robust digital infrastructure, and increasing focus on green business initiatives.	Access to early-stage funding can be challenging, bureaucratic hurdles in funding processes, regional disparities between urban and rural business support.
North Macedonia	Emerging interest in green entrepreneurship, growing number of initiatives, international collaborations.	Bureaucratic barriers, lack of financial support for youth.
Slovenia	Well-structured policy integration, strong stakeholder engagement, large number of initiatives.	Lack of coordination among different actors, fragmented ecosystem.
Spain	Developed startup ecosystem, strong digital infrastructure, and active private sector support.	Discontinuation of government programs and bureaucratic barriers hinder long-term entrepreneurial growth.

Key initiatives and support mechanisms

Each country has its own unique initiatives targeting youth entrepreneurship and green business development. Some of the most notable ones include:

BULGARIA

- Junior Achievement Eco Camp
- National Digital Bulgaria 2025
- Government-funded energy efficiency projects
- Rinker Center for Entrepreneurship

HUNGARY

- Junior Achievement Programme
- Girls Go Circular
- Money7 Project
- Design Terminal Mentoring Programme

IRELAND

- Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs)
- Enterprise Ireland
- Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur
- Junior Achievement Ireland (JAI)
- Student Enterprise Programme

NORTH MACEDONIA

- Green Business Ideas Accelerator
- Junior Achievement Innovation Camp
- Social Entrepreneurship for Youth Employment
- Panda Labs Achievers

SLOVENIA

- Entrepreneurial Camp
- Erasmus+ Youth's Street Action to Fight Climate Change
- GreenComp Sustainability Competence Framework
- IC Geoss YouthECO

SPAIN

- ENISA (National Innovation Company)
- Green Lab Emprendimiento
- Red Eprende Verde

Accessibility and inclusivity

The effectiveness of non-formal entrepreneurship education programs largely depends on their accessibility and inclusivity. The following list provides an overview of how the six analyzed countries ensure young people's access to these programs, with a particular focus on disadvantaged and rural youth. While these initiatives aim to reach a broad audience, several barriers—such as the digital divide, geographical distance, and administrative constraints—can hinder participation. The list below summarizes the key strengths and challenges related to accessibility in each country.



Reach and accessibility

Growing online learning options, eco-entrepreneurship training. (Bulgaria)

Programs cover both urban and rural areas but with disparities. (Hungary)

Strong government support for entrepreneurship, well-developed startup ecosystem, education initiatives. (Ireland)

Training programs increasingly available, international opportunities. (North Macedonia)

Extensive network of non-formal education providers. (Slovenia)

Strong digital infrastructure, centralized platforms. (Spain)

Barriers to participation

Lack of structured, publicly available green entrepreneurship resources. (Bulgaria)

Digital divide and school-based participation limits outreach to disadvantaged youth. (Hungary)

Access to funding for early-stage entrepreneurs can be challenging, rural disparities exist. (Ireland)

Bureaucratic challenges, lack of funding, limited national strategy. (North Macedonia)

Fragmentation of efforts and limited coordination. (Slovenia)

Policy instability and discontinuation of key government programs hinder long-term entrepreneurial growth. (Spain)

Funding and sustainability

The long-term success and impact of non-formal entrepreneurship education programs depend heavily on stable funding sources and sustainable support mechanisms. In the following, we examine how each country finances its initiatives, highlighting the role of government support, EU grants, private sector contributions, and other financial incentives. While some nations have well-established funding structures, others struggle with short-term, project-based financing, making it difficult to ensure the continuity and scalability of these programs. The sections below outline the primary funding sources and key challenges in each country.

◆ Primary Funding Sources

The primary funding sources for non-formal entrepreneurship education and green business initiatives vary across countries. Hungary relies on EU grants, government funding, and private sector contributions, though access is often tied to school registration. Slovenia combines government, municipal, and EU funding, but short-term projects create sustainability challenges. North Macedonia depends on international donors (Rockefeller Fund), yet bureaucratic barriers limit access to green funding. Spain previously built on government-backed initiatives and private incubators, but policy instability has created uncertainty. Bulgaria utilizes EU funding and green loans, though many initiatives remain small-scale. Ireland offers strong support through Local Enterprise Offices and Enterprise Ireland, ensuring funding and mentorship for startups, though regional disparities persist.

◆ Challenges in funding

Funding challenges for non-formal entrepreneurship education and green business initiatives vary across countries, often hindering long-term impact. Hungary faces accessibility issues as many programs require school registration, limiting open participation. Slovenia struggles with short-term, project-based funding, making sustainability difficult. North Macedonia encounters bureaucratic complexity, making green funding difficult to access despite international donor support. Spain faces uncertain long-term funding due to shifting government priorities and policy changes. Bulgaria deals with fragmented initiatives, as many funding programs remain small-scale or region-specific. Ireland offers strong national support through Enterprise Ireland and competitions, but bureaucratic hurdles can complicate funding access, particularly for early-stage startups.



Strengths and weaknesses in green entrepreneurship education

Green entrepreneurship education is increasingly recognized as a crucial element in preparing young entrepreneurs for a sustainable future. However, the extent to which sustainability principles are integrated into non-formal education varies significantly across countries. The following sections outline each country's strengths in promoting green entrepreneurship, along with the existing gaps and challenges that need to be addressed. While some countries have made significant strides in incorporating sustainability into their programs, others still struggle to provide structured and widely accessible green entrepreneurship training.

◆ Strengths in green entrepreneurship

- Hands-on green training (Eco Camps, Rinker Center); Bulgaria
- Some programs include sustainability elements (Green Mentor); Hungary
- High accessibility due to well-developed digital infrastructure; Ireland
- Focus on circular economy and energy efficiency; North Macedonia
- Strong policy support for green innovation; Slovenia
- Active green business networks and regional initiatives supporting sustainable entrepreneurship; Spain

Gaps and weaknesses

- Limited free and accessible training materials on green entrepreneurship; (Bulgaria)
- Green entrepreneurship is not fully integrated into mainstream education; (Hungary)
- Rural areas may still face challenges in accessing funding and mentorship; (Ireland)
- Limited financial support and practical implementation challenges; (North Macedonia)
- Lack of a national platform for non-formal education on sustainability; (Slovenia)
- Policy shifts have disrupted long-term sustainability efforts; (Spain)

Key recommendations



01. Expand accessibility to rural and disadvantaged youth

- Hungary and North Macedonia should enhance digital infrastructure and expand outreach efforts.
- Bulgaria needs to establish a centralized, free online training platform.
- Ireland should tackle regional disparities by expanding targeted entrepreneurial programs and mentorship opportunities in rural areas.

02. Strengthen digital and interactive learning methods

- Hungary, Slovenia, and Bulgaria need to further enhance online tools and incorporate gamification to improve green entrepreneurship learning.
- Ireland can capitalize on its strong digital infrastructure to expand online entrepreneurship education and training resources.

03. Increase financial and logistical support for green startups

- North Macedonia and Bulgaria need to simplify bureaucratic procedures related to grants and funding.
- Ireland can streamline funding application processes to reduce bureaucratic barriers for startups and ensure easier access to financial support.

04. Improve coordination and integration

- Countries like Slovenia and Spain would benefit from better coordination among stakeholders to prevent fragmented initiatives.
- North Macedonia and Bulgaria need stronger national policies to unify green entrepreneurship efforts.
- Ireland can enhance collaboration between government agencies and private sector actors to strengthen support mechanisms for young entrepreneurs.

05. Ensure long-term sustainability of programs

- Governments would benefit from providing more stable funding, moving away from short-term, project-based structures that lack continuity.
- Ireland can strengthen long-term funding strategies for entrepreneurial education and green startup initiatives to ensure sustained impact.



Conclusion

Non-formal entrepreneurship education across the six analyzed countries operates at different levels of development, yet all share the common goal of equipping young people with entrepreneurial skills and fostering sustainable business models. The analysis highlights that while some countries provide comprehensive government support and stable funding structures, others rely on short-term, project-based initiatives, which can hinder long-term sustainability. Ireland, with its strong entrepreneurial ecosystem and government-backed initiatives, stands out as a country where structured programs support young entrepreneurs, although challenges such as accessibility in rural areas and bureaucratic funding barriers persist.

The role of policy and strategic frameworks

Countries with clear entrepreneurship strategies are better equipped to integrate non-formal entrepreneurship education into their economic and innovation goals, ensuring long-term sustainability. In contrast, North Macedonia and Bulgaria lack comprehensive policies, resulting in fragmented initiatives and reduced efficiency.

Funding challenges and opportunities

Most non-formal entrepreneurship programs rely on EU funding, government support, and private partnerships, but short-term funding limits sustainability. While Spain, Slovenia, and Ireland have strong backing, North Macedonia and Bulgaria face financial and administrative hurdles. In Ireland, bureaucracy can still hinder early-stage entrepreneurs.

Accessibility and inclusion

Despite efforts to improve access, digital gaps, geographical barriers, and information asymmetry remain challenges. Hungary and North Macedonia struggle with rural access, while Slovenia and Spain use advanced digital solutions to enhance reach. Ireland also faces regional disparities, with strong urban ecosystems but limited rural support. Expanding outreach in underdeveloped areas would boost inclusivity.

Green entrepreneurship education and sustainability awareness

Green entrepreneurship education is growing but remains outside mainstream training. Bulgaria and North Macedonia see rising but fragmented initiatives, while Hungary and Slovenia offer targeted programs like Green Mentor and Eco Camps, providing hands-on experience in sustainable business.

Opportunities for international collaboration and knowledge sharing

Each country's experience offers opportunities for mutual learning and collaboration. While Erasmus+ and EU programs support knowledge exchange, stronger partnerships, shared training platforms, and cross-border mentorship are needed. A Europe-wide digital learning platform could enhance accessibility and promote standardization. With its strong digital infrastructure and startup support, Ireland could lead knowledge-sharing and acceleration initiatives.

Non-formal entrepreneurship education plays a crucial role in shaping young people's career opportunities and driving economic innovation. However, challenges remain in terms of accessibility, funding, and sustainability. While each country's approach reflects its unique economic and educational landscape, Ireland serves as a model for strong government-supported entrepreneurial programs, though improvements in funding accessibility and regional outreach are still needed. EU cooperation, shared learning platforms, and long-term strategies can help build a more stable, inclusive, and sustainable entrepreneurial education system across Europe.

