

# Entrepreneurship education in Ireland<sup>1</sup>

## 1 OVERVIEW

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In Ireland, discussions about embedding entrepreneurship in education in Ireland are very visible and on-going. Although entrepreneurship education is not explicitly recognised as an objective at primary school level, at secondary school level, it is recognised as a cross-curricular objective. There are a number of entrepreneurship modules, courses and short courses addressing the topic. In secondary education, entrepreneurship skills are integrated in optional subjects such as "Business Studies" and "Business".

Ireland does not have a specific national strategy for entrepreneurship education, but the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme are visible policy tools, which embed the objective of fostering and underpinning entrepreneurial mind-sets. Both certificates are particular strands within the general school-leaving examination, which is taken at the age of 18. They contain a set of modules around entrepreneurship.

Another way to promote entrepreneurship skills in the Irish education system is the so-called "Transition years". They are offered at school level, at the end of the junior cycle, to facilitate pupils' transition to the upper cycle. Transition years are optional and are usually not bound by a strict curriculum. Teachers have the freedom to develop their own programmes, focusing on their passions and interests, very often reflecting local cultures and needs. As a part of this, local school businesses can be established.

## 2 EXAMPLES OF ON-GOING INITIATIVES ADDRESSING ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

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### 2.1 COMPANY PROGRAMME

The Company Programme is a well-established JA-YE initiative, is implemented in many European countries with slight variations. It aims to help students gain experience from various roles in business life. Throughout the programme, students are in close contact with business volunteers that act as their mentors and expert guides. Every team set up runs a virtual company, supported by JA-YE volunteers. The initiative primarily targets secondary school students. Teachers from secondary schools are also involved, providing on-going guidance to the teams from their schools. In 2013-2014, 8,692 students participated in this programme.

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<sup>1</sup> This country fiche was prepared by Technopolis Group with contribution from 3s, DTI and ICF as part of the 'Entrepreneurship 360 - Promoting entrepreneurial learning in primary and secondary education and in vocational education and training project' commissioned by the European Commission, DG Education and Culture.

The content of this document, including the case studies and the descriptions of the initiatives reflect the information available as of August 2015.

## 2.2 JUNIOR ENTREPRENEUR

The Junior Entrepreneur Programme is an education programme focusing on the promotion of entrepreneurship education in primary schools. The programme lasts between 10 – 16 weeks and its main aim is to develop entrepreneurship skills in pupils, including literacy, writing, presentation, drawing, technology, research skills, numeracy, financial and consumer awareness, storytelling, listening skills, creative thinking, problem solving, team building and collaboration. The programme is implemented in collaboration with the Mary Immaculate College in Limerick, Ireland. Pupils take part in this programme through their primary schools, which means there needs to be strong commitment from their teachers and school leaders. In 2015, 10,000 pupils participated in the programme.

## 2.3 STUDENT ENTERPRISE AWARDS

Student Enterprise Awards is a national programme at secondary school level, implemented by the Country and City Enterprise Boards. It is open to all class levels in secondary education. Participating in the awards give students practical experience of setting up and running their own business. It encourages students to think about entrepreneurship and self-employment as a viable career choice and enhances the teaching of business and entrepreneurship in schools by combining classroom learning with real-life experience. The timetable for the programme is synchronised within a school year. The programme culminates with a National Final. Annually, over 17,000 students from secondary schools participate.

## 2.4 BI GNOTHACH PRIMARY SCHOOLS ENTERPRISE PROGRAMME

Bi Gnothach Primary Schools Enterprise Programme is an initiative developed by the Curriculum Development Unit of Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick. It aims at introducing pupils to the world of enterprise at a young age. Pupils, 10 – 12 years old, learn how to set up and run a business and also learn about the external factors that influence the success of an enterprise. The programme also includes ethical education in business. Bi Gnothach is an add-on activity to the school curriculum. In 2014, 32 schools and more than 1,000 pupils from the South Dublin country took part.

## 2.5 FURTHER INFORMATION AND CONTACT DETAILS ON THE INITIATIVES

Title of initiative in English	Company Programme	Junior entrepreneur	Student Enterprise Awards	Bi Gnothach Primary Schools Enterprise Programme
Title of the initiative in the local language	Company Programme	Junior entrepreneur	Student Enterprise Awards	Bi Gnothach Primary Schools Enterprise Programme
Type of initiative	Programme for young entrepreneurs	Educational courses for pupils	Student competition	Education courses for pupils
Launch date of the initiative		2011	2005	2005
Name of implementing body	Junior Achievement Ireland	Jerry Kennelly (founder & CEO of Tweak.com)	Local Enterprise Offices	Local Enterprise Offices
Level of education	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary
Target group	Pupils	Pupils	Pupils	Pupils
Link to further information	<a href="http://www.jai.ie/our-programmes/company-programme">http://www.jai.ie/our-programmes/company-programme</a>	<a href="http://www.juniorentrepreneur.ie/">http://www.juniorentrepreneur.ie/</a>	<a href="http://www.studententerprise.ie/">http://www.studententerprise.ie/</a>	<a href="https://www.localenterprise.ie/SouthDublin/Student-Enterprise/Primary-Schools-Enterprise-Programme/Bi-Gnothach-Primary-Schools-Enterprise-Programme.html">https://www.localenterprise.ie/SouthDublin/Student-Enterprise/Primary-Schools-Enterprise-Programme/Bi-Gnothach-Primary-Schools-Enterprise-Programme.html</a>
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