



YEPA Workshop 5
Entrepreneurship Skills and Mindsets
Discussion Note | 19 February 2025 | Group I

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Entrepreneurship Skills and Mindsets

Why is supporting the development of entrepreneurship skills and mindsets among youth a priority policy issue?

Over the last decade, many governments in European Union (EU) Member States and OECD countries have prioritised supporting young people in entering the labour market, including through entrepreneurship. Public policy plays an important role in promoting skills development among young people. This includes large-scale initiatives such as the [European Year of Skills](#) (2023-24), which aimed to address skills gaps in the EU, particularly gaps related to digital and green technology skills. The initiative brought together international actors, such as the European Commission and European Parliament, national actors (governments in EU Member States, public and private employment services) as well as regional and local actors (e.g. social partners, chambers of commerce and industry, education and training providers) to promote and support skills development through a wide range of initiatives. Similarly, OECD countries have been working to implement the [OECD Recommendation on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People](#) (2022). The OECD recently released the OECD Youth Policy Toolkit to help governments (**Box 1**). It provides practical guidance for designing and implementing policies for young people, including youth entrepreneurship support schemes.

Box 1. OECD Youth Policy Toolkit

The OECD Youth Policy Toolkit aims to support governments in implementing the OECD Recommendation on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People. It provides policy advice and case study models to promote government-wide strategies and schemes to improve outcomes for young people in many policy areas, including employment, entrepreneurship, education and social policies, as well as civic engagement and public governance. The OECD Youth Policy Toolkit provides practical guidance and good practice examples around five pillars:

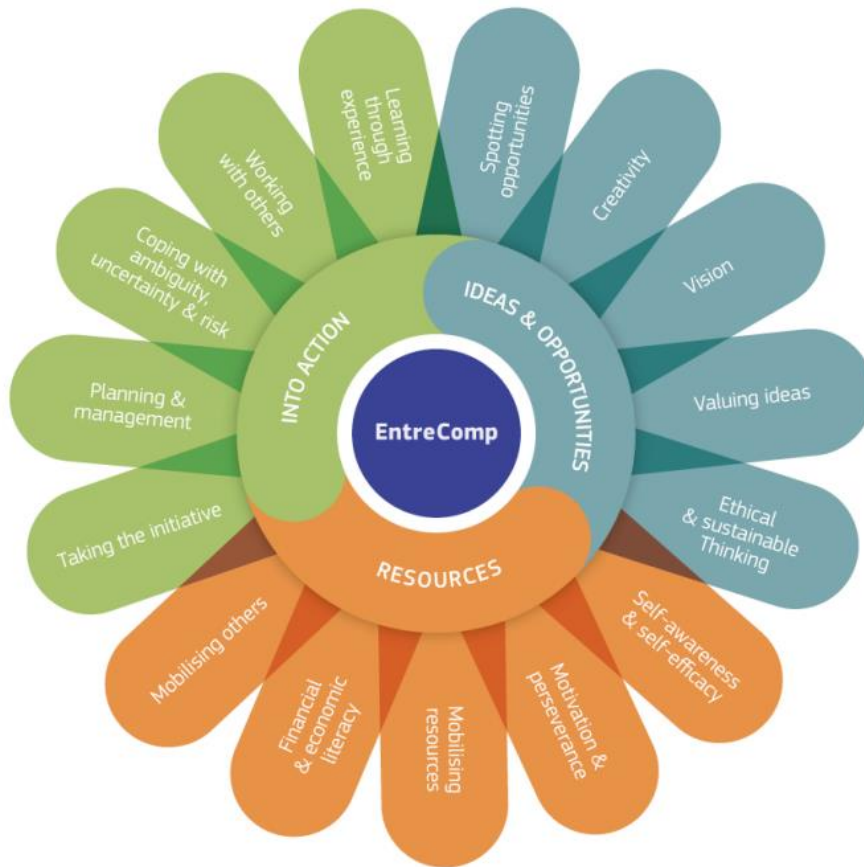
- **Skills and competencies**, with the aim to ensure young people of all backgrounds and in all circumstances acquire relevant knowledge and developed appropriate skills and competencies.
- **Support for young people within the labour market**, as well as supporting young people in their transition into the labour market, notably those from vulnerable or disadvantaged circumstances.
- **Social inclusion and youth well-being** beyond economic outcomes, with measures targeted at young people in vulnerable or disadvantaged circumstances.
- **Trust of young people in government and public institutions** by establishing legal, institutional and administrative settings to strengthen the trust of young people of all backgrounds in government and their relationships with public institutions.
- **Administrative and technical capacities to address age-based discrimination**, seeking to reinforce administrative and technical capacities to deliver youth-responsive services and age-based inequalities through collaboration across all levels of government.

To explore the 70 good practice case studies and access the Toolkit, please visit the [OECD Youth Policy Toolkit webpage](#).

Source: (OECD, 2024)

Broad efforts to equip young people for the world of work have been undertaken, and entrepreneurship skills are increasingly recognised as a valuable set of transversal competences. The [Entrepreneurship Competence Framework \(EntreComp\)](#) was developed by the Joint Research Centre and DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. Beyond having the skills needed for self-employment or launching a start-up, entrepreneurially minded people are ready to employ personal and external resources in order to transform their ideas into action. The EntreComp framework recognises the need to foster entrepreneurial mindsets and competencies in a variety of contexts and settings. EntreComp proposes transversal skills that can be applied in formal and informal learning contexts as well as structured and non-structured learning systems, applying equally to education and training systems. The framework identifies three core competence areas: 1) ideas and opportunities, 2) resources and 3) into action (**Figure 1**). Each area includes five competences (e.g. taking the initiative, motivation and perseverance, valuing ideas). For each competence, the framework ascribes learning outcomes across different age levels (e.g. foundation, intermediate, advanced, etc.), totalling to 442 learning outcome statements.

Figure 1. EntreComp – the entrepreneurship competence framework



Source: (Bacigalupo, M. et al., 2016)

As showcased by the EntreComp Framework, entrepreneurs often benefit from a range of skills when starting and managing a business, including both the workplace skills required of employees as well as additional skills needed to run a business including technical skills, business management skills and personal entrepreneurial skills (OECD/The European Commission, 2013). While some of these skills may not be necessary for business success, possessing them is likely to increase the quality and sustainability of the business.

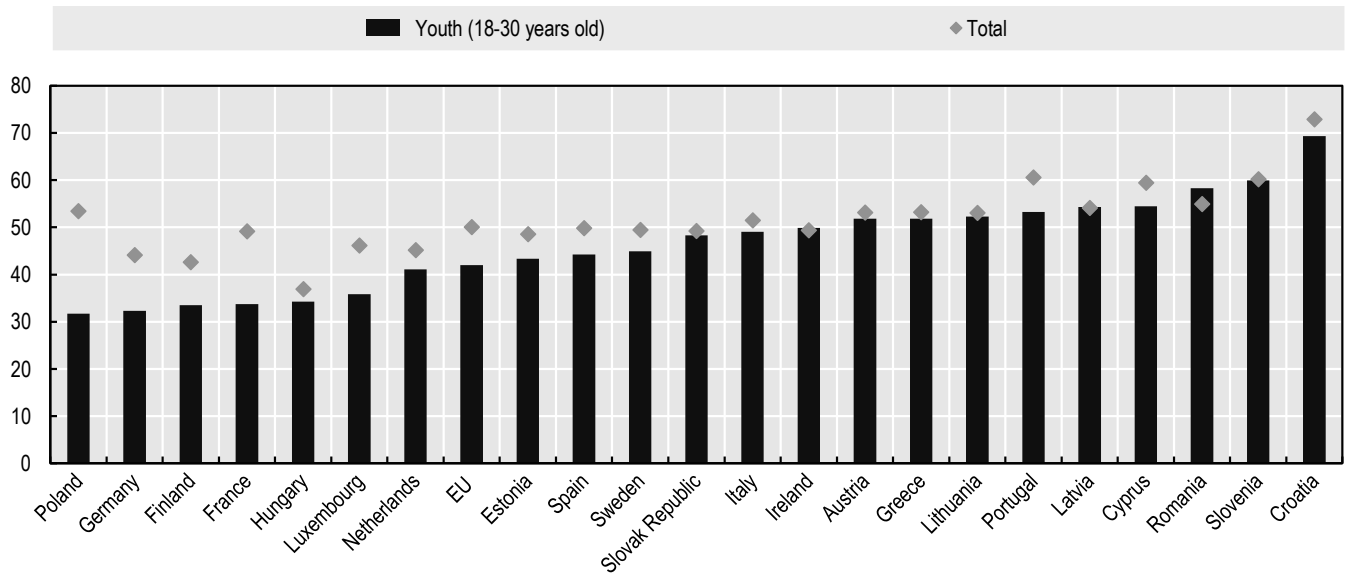
Moreover, it is likely that the skills needed by entrepreneurs evolves as new business models and practices emerge. For example, young entrepreneurs operating green start-ups or businesses likely need specific skills related to their activity (e.g. complying with efficiency and emission standards) and may also need specialised AI and data science skills (e.g. coding, machine learning, data) (OECD, 2024). Currently, many of these skills are difficult to acquire for young people as they have not yet been widely integrated into traditional education and entrepreneurship training programmes. Moreover, these skills will continue to evolve with the development of digital and innovative technologies, which will require upskilling and reskilling.

Despite a growing number of entrepreneurship education and training programmes, many young people continue to be held back by a lack of entrepreneurship skills (OECD/EU, 2023). Only about four-in-ten youth in the EU reported having the skills and knowledge needed to start a business between 2019 and 2023 (**Figure 2**). This share was below the overall proportion of adults (18-64 years old) – 50%. Moreover, a recent Flash Eurobarometer survey also highlighted that a lack of skills is a common factor that stops young people from becoming entrepreneurs, as 31% of respondents reported skills and knowledge as an important barrier to business creation (European Commission, 2023). It is also important to recognise that many young people may overestimate their business management abilities and underestimate the challenges that they will likely encounter given their lack of experience.

Young people’s confidence in having entrepreneurship skills and knowledge varied considerably by country. This is in part due to the differences in social attitudes towards entrepreneurship as well as availability and access to entrepreneurship resources and support, including entrepreneurship education. The highest shares of youth reporting having the needed skills and knowledge to start a business were in Croatia (69%) and Slovenia (60%) and the lowest shares were in Poland and Germany (32% each).

Figure 2. Young people’s entrepreneurship skills vary considerably by country

“Do you have the knowledge and skills to start a business?”, 2019-23



Source: GEM special tabulations (2024)

How can young people be empowered to gain entrepreneurship skills and develop entrepreneurial mindsets?

Entrepreneurship capacity-building schemes can help young people acquire valuable skills and experience that will help them in their career, regardless of whether they go on to start a business. These initiatives also provide young people the opportunity to gain transferable skills, making them more employable. While not everyone who participates in entrepreneurship capacity-building initiatives goes on to start a business, the wider benefits of participating have been recognised (OECD/EU, 2023):

- Generating more positive self-perceptions and increased self-confidence;
- Developing entrepreneurial mindsets and learning how to work in flexible ways;
- Preparing young people for the future of work, including preparing for the digital and green transitions;
- Stimulating growth and job creation by harnessing entrepreneurial talent among youth; and
- Addressing unemployment by upskilling and reskilling young people.

There are many different approaches to supporting the development of skills among young people. Some schemes are offered as stand-alone initiatives, while others are offered as integrated packages. There are also many different formats of entrepreneurship capacity-building schemes, such as entrepreneurship training, coaching and mentoring schemes, business counselling and peer-learning initiatives among others (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Many formats of entrepreneurship capacity-building schemes exist

Type	Training format	Short description
One-to-many	Classroom training/ Course	Most common type of entrepreneurship training. The trainer-led format delivers a range of materials on a range of relevant topics in an in-person group setting. Example: Entrepreneurially into the World of Business (Slovenia)
	Workshop	Short-format trainings in either a single session or a series of short sessions, which aim to address specific topics and skills to a narrow target group. Example: Future Heroes (Latvia)
	Masterclass	Single session or small series of workshops taught by a recognised world-class trainer. Example: Resilience Programme* (Netherlands)

	Bootcamp	Series of short, intensive training sessions, typically ranging between 3 days and 2 weeks that can combine different modalities of coursework, workshops, peer coaching etc. Example: Jonk Entrepreneuren (Luxembourg)
One-to-one	Coaching & mentoring	Facilitated relationships designed to provide tailored support to develop a specific skill or address a business challenge (short-term coaching) as well as long-term personal development (mentoring). Example: Young Entrepreneurs Succeed! (Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain & United Kingdom)
	Business consultancy	Fixed-term expert-led training focussed on strategic and transformational support to address a specific issue and strengthen business performance. Example: Youth Entrepreneurship Programme (Hungary)
Peer learning	Peer coaching or mentoring	Semi-structured learning format where entrepreneurs learn through structured dialogue and problem-solving with their peers, typically led by an experienced entrepreneur. Example: Technology Management, Economics, and Innovation at Western Norway University for Applied Science (Norway)
	On-the-job training	Work placement or job shadowing experience in an entrepreneurial setting, ranging from several months up to 1 year. Example: Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs* (European Union)
Online learning	Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)	Course-based training available online and free of charge to a large audience - often available for a limited timeframe (i.e. 6-12 weeks). Number of self-study hours required to complete course rarely exceeds 40 hours. Example: Big Ideas Wales (Wales, United Kingdom)
	Online training courses	Trainer-led course delivered online to a group of pre-registered students over multiple weeks (i.e. between 2 to 17 weeks). Similar to in-person courses, programme fees and additional coursework may be required. Example: We Rise (United Kingdom)
	E-learning portals	Self-directed open-access learning materials (e.g. articles, short videos, games, self-tests). Example: Digital Entrepreneurship for Youth (European Union)
Training that is integrated with many other supports	Incubators	Long-term tailored-support packages (i.e. 3 to 4 years), which aim for participants to achieve a set of milestones and often include pre and post-incubation training, workshops and networking opportunities. Example: Innofounder Graduate (Denmark)
	Accelerators	Short-term support packages (i.e. 3 to 12 months) designed to speed up the business creation process, focussing on managing influxes of capital and rapid growth. Programmes tend to take an ownership stake in the company. Example: Yei Start (France)

Note: Examples marked with (*) are not dedicated or tailored to youth entrepreneurs, but young people with early-stage businesses can participate. Source: Adapted from OECD/European Commission (2023).

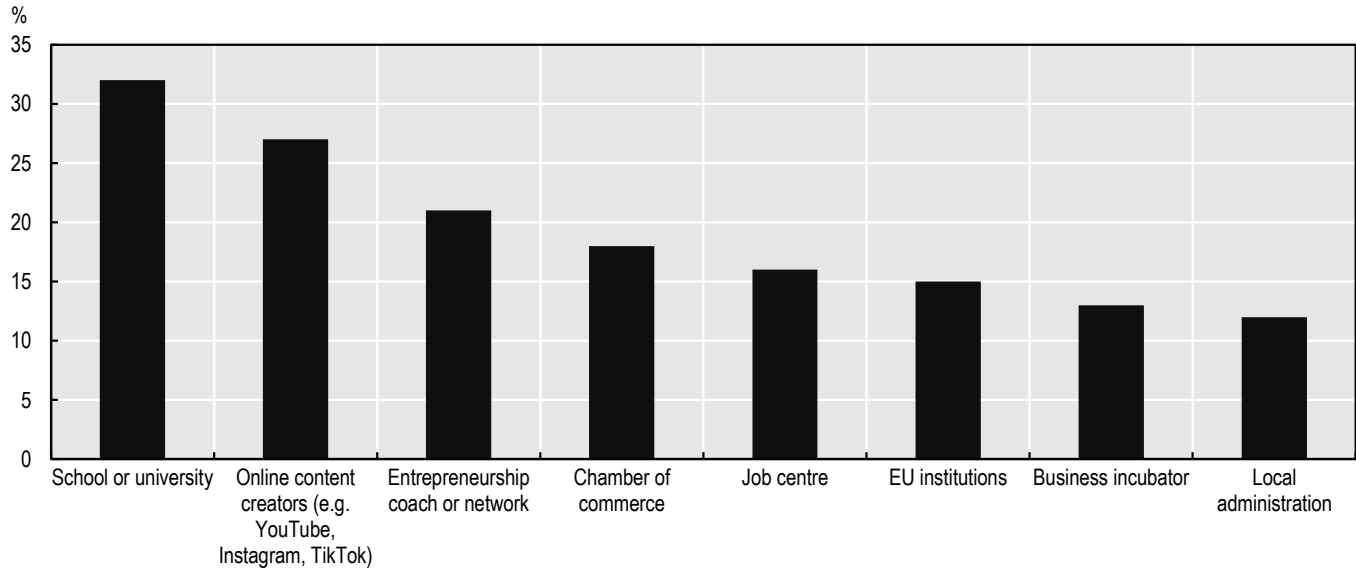
The various formats serve different purposes and allow for tailoring of support. While all formats seek to support participants in developing practical skills needed for business creation and management, the choice of format depends on a variety of factors including the mode of delivery, themes covered, intensity and frequency of training sessions, and whether other supports are provided in parallel. Capacity-building initiatives should be adjusted to the needs of different profiles of youth, as they often start and manage different types of businesses. It is also important to consider the preferences of young people in how they access resources for skill development.

Recent survey results suggest that young people are most likely to seek entrepreneurship training opportunities through educational institutions, such as schools and universities (**Figure 3**). However, online content creators (e.g. YouTube, Instagram, TikTok) have emerged as the second most likely source of entrepreneurship training, which represents a shift from traditional pathways. This signals young people's growing preference for concise on-demand information and growing use of digital platforms for education and information. While this approach can be seen as more accessible and engaging for younger audience with tailored content to their interests, there is a need to ensure that information is accurate and credible when provided by non-official sources. Unlike formal entrepreneurship training courses, online content is not always verified, making young people potentially vulnerable to misinformation surrounding business creation and the feasibility of starting a business (e.g. creating false optimism,

providing inaccurate information on legal requirements). This requires that young people have critical thinking and digital literacy skills to maximise the benefits of these sources.

Figure 3. Young people are increasingly looking to online sources to gain entrepreneurship skills

“If you were to set up your own business, which of the following options, if any, would you seek for entrepreneurship training?”, EU average



Source: Flash Eurobarometer #513 (2023).

How to design effective entrepreneurship support schemes for skill development for youth entrepreneurs?

When designing and delivering entrepreneurship training programmes for young people, it is important to tailor content to address the specific needs of the different profiles of youth, considering the needs at different points in the life cycle of their business. It is also important to consider the impact of the format used to deliver skills development programmes to young people. There are a growing number of different formats being used, and each one has benefits and drawbacks. For example, longer and more intensive training formats tend to have stronger impacts; however, they have higher delivery costs. Different target groups and profiles of young people likely have different preferences that should also be considered. For example, young people are often interested in online training and prefer the flexibility offered by this format.

The growing use of online and digital training formats offers many advantages, such as expanding outreach of programmes; however, it is important to ensure that low levels of digital skills do not prevent access to online training. While young people tend to have higher levels of digital skills than other age cohorts, not all profiles of youth have the same digital skills (OECD, 2020). For example, a survey by the Prince’s Trust showed that more than 50% of NEETs do not consider themselves very good at using computers compared to 71% of a wider sample of young people (Jones, Brinkley and Crowley, 2015). The same survey also found that about 25% of NEETs do not have confidence in their ability to create a spreadsheet. Therefore, it is important to consider the target profile when designing and tailoring programmes to ensure that they remain accessible and address specific needs of the target group.

Another key component of successful designing and delivering training to young people is to ensure that the trainers have the relevant knowledge, tools and experience with entrepreneurship. Trainers should receive training on how best to engage young people and help them to apply lessons learned. It is also important that trainers are provided with the relevant tools and resources (e.g. digital tools, guides) to make the training successful for the youth participants. One common approach to ensure that trainers are equipped to deliver youth-tailored content is for governments to partner with organisations that have experience in working with youth to ensure that the content and resources are relevant and respond to the needs of young people.

What are governments doing?

Supporting youth entrepreneurs has been a policy priority over the last decade in the EU and OECD. The majority of EU Member States (24) have a national youth strategy in place, which often include measures to support youth entrepreneurship notably skills development (OECD/EU, 2023). For example, Lithuania implemented a National Youth Policy Implementation Plan (2022) that

seeks to improve opportunities for youth entrepreneurship, while Spain introduced the Youth Guarantee Plan Plus 2021-27, which aims to help young people learn technical skills needed in the labour market, including through self-employment. In Croatia, the National Programme for Youth 2020-24 (*Nacionalni program za mlade za razdoblje 2020 do 2024*) aims to boost entrepreneurship and employment among young people and includes dedicated financial literacy schemes for young people. Additionally, the National Plan on Recovery and Resilience 2021-26 also includes measures related to entrepreneurship training and consultancy with the aim to foster skill development among Croatian youth. Moreover, the plan introduces a voucher system for training related to digital skills that aim to help young people access the programme.

Youth entrepreneurship policies and schemes can further support young people by encouraging entrepreneurship as a viable career choice and facilitating access to resources and support to help young people to start and grow their own business. Such schemes are widely available across the majority of EU Member States (OECD/EU, 2023). Nearly 90% of EU Member States offer tailored entrepreneurship training schemes for youth. Many of these tailored schemes are youth-dedicated initiatives (i.e. for youth only). Moreover, a majority of EU Member States (22) offer tailored and/or dedicated coaching and mentoring schemes for youth entrepreneurs, while about two-thirds of EU Member States have dedicated business consultancy schemes for youth entrepreneurs. Most of these schemes have high take-up rates due to targeted outreach methods to attract youth entrepreneurs (OECD/EU, 2023). For example, Austria has introduced numerous support measures for youth entrepreneurs, such as the Youth Entrepreneurship Week, which is a workshop for developing ideas and youth-led projects. Additionally, all Federal Ministries adopted the 28 “Austrian Youth Goals”, of which two of these goals aim to support young people in acquiring entrepreneurial mindsets and skills: to teach young people how to think and act economically as well as to support them in implementing their ideas and to support young people in acquiring financial literacy.

Many countries are also introducing learning platforms or applications to provide direct support for young people to gain entrepreneurship skills. In Austria, for example, the learning app “How fit are you for starting a business?” provides resources and tools for young people to explore entrepreneurship, including assessments of entrepreneurial spirit, application of setting up a company, opportunity and risk analysis among other resources. In Finland, the Yoop.fi platform is designed for students and teachers to recognise entrepreneurship competencies. On the EU-level, the Entre4all project, which is funded with support from the European Commission, includes an e-learning platform that is targeted to young adults with disabilities. The online platform not only allows participants to engage in the project’s activities but also to develop their entrepreneurial skills individually and validate their skills through a gamified approach by earning badges.

Questions for discussion

- What skills do you think are most critical for young entrepreneurs to develop in the coming years?
- Can you share an initiative or programme that has been particularly successful in fostering entrepreneurship skills and mindsets among youth?
- What tools and resources are important for trainers to have in order to successfully deliver capacity-building programmes to young people?
- What are the advantages and drawbacks to the different formats of training (e.g. face-to-face, online only, hybrid)?
- How can young people learn to assess the quality of the information, notably of online content related to entrepreneurship?
- How can young people be empowered to employ entrepreneurial thinking and mindsets outside of business creation?

Further reading

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About the OECD-EU Youth Entrepreneurship Policy Academy

The OECD-EU Youth Entrepreneurship Policy Academy (YEPA) is a peer-learning network that seeks to strengthen youth entrepreneurship policies in the European Union (EU). This new initiative aims to strengthen youth entrepreneurship policies and programmes by raising knowledge about the barriers faced by young people in entrepreneurship and facilitating exchanges between policy makers, experts and young entrepreneurs on “what works” in youth entrepreneurship policy. This new initiative builds on an existing collaboration on inclusive entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship undertaken by the European Commission and the OECD, which includes the award-winning report series *The Missing Entrepreneurs*.

About the OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities

The OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities provides comparative statistics, analysis and capacity building for local and national actors to work together to unleash the potential of entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises, promote inclusive and sustainable regions and cities, boost local job creation, and support sound tourism policies.

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About the European Union’s Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion develops and carries out the European Commission's policies on employment and social affairs, education and training. This includes, for example, support for more and better jobs through the European Employment Strategy, free movement of workers and coordination of social security schemes and supporting social inclusion by supporting efforts to combat poverty and social exclusion, reform social protection systems, assess new demographic and social developments.

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See also information on social entrepreneurship : https://social-economy-gateway.ec.europa.eu/index_en