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STRATEGY OF ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING – LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Edita Kastratović¹
Milan Dragić²
Milica Kastratović³

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ABSTRACT

The paper provides an analysis of the legislative framework of the European Union and the Republic of Serbia regarding entrepreneurial education and training. Entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial innovation, and flexibility are the main characteristics of entrepreneurial management, regardless of whether it is a large or small enterprise, a production or service organization, a governmental or non-governmental institution. Entrepreneurship, as a dynamic process of continuous change in both economic structure and efficiency, requires competent personnel who are creative, innovative, and capable of assuming the risks associated with business actions. For all these reasons, entrepreneurial education becomes a key factor for advancing innovative capabilities and fostering economic growth, both at the individual level and in the broader societal context. The analysis has shown that entrepreneurship is an indispensable factor in the development of national and other economies and that entrepreneurial learning is an integral part of the strategic and legal documents across various sectors.

KEYWORDS

education, entrepreneurship, legal regulation, entrepreneurial education

INTRODUCTION

In the European Charter for Small Enterprises, education and training for entrepreneurship are defined as key activities that needed to be systematically addressed to accelerate the path towards the quality development of small enterprises in the EU. The direction of action and recommendations in this context focused on the following: "Europe will nurture entrepreneurial spirit and new skills from an earlier age. General knowledge about business and entrepreneurship needs to be taught at all school levels. Specific business-related modules should be made an essential ingredient of education schemes at secondary level and at colleges and universities. We will encourage and promote youngsters' entrepreneurial endeavors and develop appropriate training schemes for managers in small enterprises" [1].

¹ Faculty of Business Economics and Entrepreneurship, Belgrade, Serbia, edita.kastratovic@vspep.edu.rs, ORCID: 0009-0003-0808-1220

² Faculty of Business Economics and Entrepreneurship, Belgrade, Serbia, milan.dragic@vspep.edu.rs, ORCID: 0009-0002-1023-1921

³ Faculty for business studies and law, Belgrade, Serbia, kastratovicmilica@yahoo.com, ORCID: 0009-0004-9218-4990



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Table 1. European charter for small enterprises: Lines for action

1. Education and training for entrepreneurship	6. More out of the Single Market
2. Cheaper and faster start-up	7. Taxation and financial matters
3. Better legislation and regulation	8. Strengthen the technological capacity of small enterprises
4. Availability of skills	9. Successful e-business models and top-class small business support
5. Improving online access	10. Develop stronger, more effective representation of small enterprises' interests at Union and national level

Source: authors

Entrepreneurial education is an essential process for every successful business. There are several definitions of entrepreneurial education. What they have in common is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are not limited solely to starting one's own business, but are applicable in any area of life and work. Innovation, as a key factor in entrepreneurship, is applied within the creative context of designing new business ventures, or within an existing enterprise, where employees will know how to apply the adopted entrepreneurial philosophy, use entrepreneurial processes, and understand the significance of business opportunities, resources, and teams. This latter interpretation is also known as corporate entrepreneurship, where employees are corporate entrepreneurs with the vision and ability to generate new ideas and turn them into profitable products or services.

According to authors Kisić & Petković, entrepreneurial education is viewed in a broader context as a process of developing an entrepreneurial mindset, entrepreneurial skills, and personal qualities that have universal application [2]. Author Vidić interprets entrepreneurial education as a lifelong process that begins in elementary school and extends through all subsequent levels of education, including adult education [3]. The expert body of the European Commission stated that entrepreneurial education "should not be confused with general business and economic studies; its goal is to promote creativity, innovation, and self-employment, and it may include the following elements: the development of personal attributes and skills that form the foundation of entrepreneurial spirit and behavior (creativity, initiative, risk-taking, independence, self-confidence, leadership, teamwork, etc.); raising students' and pupils' awareness of self-employment and entrepreneurship as potential career options; working on concrete entrepreneurial projects and activities; providing specific business skills and knowledge on how to start and successfully run a business"[4].

The educational system plays a significant role in the process of entrepreneurial education. In the Republic of Serbia and European Union countries, entrepreneurial education is systematically regulated by a specific group of adopted documents. One of the fundamental documents is the Oslo Agenda for Entrepreneurship Education in Europe, which, among other things, includes: "Better integrate entrepreneurship programmes and activities in the established curriculum for schools at all levels (primary, secondary, vocational), as a horizontal element in all fields of study (entrepreneurial mindset) and as a subject in its own right (entrepreneurial skills); In its broader definition (fostering attributes like creativity, autonomy, initiative, team spirit, etc.) entrepreneurship should be also included in the curriculum for primary schools. Especially at this level of education it is important to convince schools, teachers and parents that entrepreneurship is a key competence for all, and it does not aim to turn all pupils into businessmen" [5].

The following section provides an overview of the legal framework for entrepreneurial education in the countries of the European Union and the Republic of Serbia. All activities are aimed at developing students' key



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skills and competencies for entrepreneurial education. This includes a range of activities: introducing entrepreneurship-related subjects into curricula, applying modern teaching methods, fostering cooperation between schools and local businesses, organizing entrepreneurship fairs, and more.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION IN EUROPEAN UNION COUNTRIES

In Lisbon, in 2000, the European Union adopted a development strategy, known as the Lisbon Strategy. The strategic goals were as follows: "By 2010, the EU should become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of achieving sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs, and stronger social cohesion." At the heart of this document was the development and improvement of knowledge, which required increased investment in education and professional development, scientific and technological research, and innovation [6]. However, despite the EU's efforts to become the most competitive knowledge-based economy globally, significant delays occurred in achieving the goals of the Lisbon Strategy. The reasons for the deviation were partly due to the worsening global economic situation and the growing competition from new economic powers, but also due to the slow progress of reforms within the EU countries themselves. For this reason, in 2005, the European Council redefined the broad goals set in Lisbon and focused priorities on growth and employment. The EU adopted the "Revised (New) Lisbon Strategy," reaffirming that knowledge, innovation, and the optimization of human capital are key to development. [7].

After the Lisbon Strategy, a series of documents were adopted that more precisely define the development guidelines for both entrepreneurial education and education as a whole. In 2001, the report *The Concrete Future Objectives of Education Systems* was adopted. It emphasized the importance of education and training for acquiring the necessary entrepreneurial skills in starting and developing innovative businesses. The role of education in fostering entrepreneurial skills and an entrepreneurial mindset is immeasurable [8]. In the 2003 document *Green Paper on Entrepreneurship in Europe*, education and training were highlighted as significant potential for entrepreneurial business. The *Green Paper* argues that entrepreneurship is important because it contributes to job creation, economic growth, and competitiveness [9]. The next document, considered fundamental for entrepreneurial learning, is the *Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* from 2006. Competences are described here as a blend of knowledge, skills, and attitudes suited to the context. Key competences are those that every individual needs for personal fulfillment and growth, active participation in society, social inclusion, and employment. [10].

Table 2. The Reference framework sets out eight key competences

1. Communication in the mother tongue	5. Learning to learn
2. Communication in foreign languages	6. Social and civic competences
3. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology	7. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
4. Digital competence	8. Cultural awareness and expression

Source: authors

All key competences are considered equally important, as each can contribute to success in a knowledge-based society. Many of these competences overlap and are interconnected. Literacy, numeracy skills,



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and knowledge of information and communication technologies form the foundation for further learning, while the competence of "learning how to learn" is crucial for all forms of education. There are a range of skills applicable within the Reference Framework, such as critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem-solving, risk assessment, decision-making, and constructive emotional management—these are present in all eight key competences. Communication in one's mother tongue involves the ability to express and interpret thoughts, feelings, facts, and opinions clearly and accurately, both orally and in writing. It also includes the ability to engage in appropriate linguistic interaction across a wide range of social and cultural contexts, such as education, work, home life, and leisure. Communication in a foreign language shares key aspects with communication in the mother tongue: it is based on the ability to understand and express thoughts, feelings, facts, and opinions, verbally or in writing, in various social and cultural contexts. Additionally, it requires skills such as cultural mediation and intercultural understanding. Mathematical competence involves the ability to apply mathematical thinking and skills to solve everyday problems. It is not limited to arithmetic knowledge but also encompasses problem-solving processes and logical, spatial thinking. Scientific competence pertains to the use of scientific methods and knowledge to explain natural phenomena, while technological competence involves applying this knowledge to meet human needs. Both domains include an understanding of the effects of human activities on nature and society, as well as individual responsibility [10].

Digital competence encompasses the critical and safe use of information technologies in everyday life, at work, and in leisure activities. This competence is based on fundamental skills in using ICT for searching, evaluating, storing, and sharing information, as well as for online communication. The competence of "learning how to learn" enables individuals to develop the ability for lifelong learning, both independently and in groups. This competence involves awareness of personal learning needs, the ability to find opportunities for further development, and overcoming obstacles. Motivation and self-confidence are key elements of this competence. Social and civic competences include personal, interpersonal, and intercultural skills, allowing individuals to participate effectively in social and professional life. Civic competence, based on knowledge of political and social structures, empowers individuals for active participation in democratic life. Initiative and entrepreneurship relate to an individual's ability to turn ideas into reality, including creativity, innovation, and a willingness to take risks. These skills enable individuals to plan and implement projects in everyday life and at work, making them more capable of recognizing opportunities and achieving business goals. Additionally, there is an important emphasis on ethical values and responsible business practices. Cultural awareness and expression pertain to understanding and appreciating the importance of creatively expressing ideas, experiences, and emotions through various media, such as music, visual arts, literature, and performance [10].

Following the adoption of the Oslo Agenda for Entrepreneurship Education in Europe, two documents were issued: The Helsinki Communiqué on Enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training from 2006 and The Bordeaux Communiqué on Enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training from 2008. The first document indicates that Europe needs investment in vocational education and training and that education and training play a central role in responding to the challenges faced [11]. According to the second document, the Bordeaux Communiqué, entrepreneurial learning is an integral part of vocational education and training, representing a primary competence in secondary vocational education and training [12].

The Small Business Act (SBA) was adopted in 2008 and represents a strategic document in the field of small and medium-sized enterprises. The main priorities of the SBA are to promote entrepreneurship, improve access to finance, reduce the regulatory burden, and enhance access to markets and internationalization. These priorities are outlined in ten principles designed to guide the design and implementation of policies at the EU and national levels:



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1. create an environment in which entrepreneurs and family businesses can thrive and entrepreneurship is rewarded;
2. ensure that honest entrepreneurs who have faced bankruptcy quickly get a second chance;
3. design rules according to the "think small first" principle;
4. make public administrations responsive to the needs of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs);
5. adapt public policy tools to SMEs' needs: facilitate SMEs' participation in public procurement and better utilize state aid possibilities for SMEs;
6. facilitate SMEs' access to finance and develop a legal and business environment supportive of timely payments in commercial transactions;
7. help SMEs benefit more from the opportunities offered by the EU's single market;
8. promote the upgrading of skills in SMEs and all forms of innovation;
9. enable SMEs to turn environmental challenges into opportunities; 10. encourage and support SMEs to benefit from market growth" [13].

The Europe 2020 Strategy, adopted by the European Commission in 2010, focuses on three interrelated priorities:

- "smart growth—developing a knowledge-based and innovative economy;
- sustainable growth – simultaneously promoting competitiveness and production that uses resources more efficiently; and
- inclusive growth—better participation in the labor market, combating poverty, and social cohesion" [14].

One of the main objectives set by the European Commission is employment, specifically that 75% of the population aged between 20 and 64 should be employed.

Following the Strategy, additional documents were adopted that directly recognize the importance of entrepreneurial education and training at all levels, as well as the role of entrepreneurial experience through education: the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training from 2009 [15], Rethinking Education: Investing in Skills for Better Socioeconomic Outcomes from 2012, the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan from 2013 [16], national strategies on entrepreneurial education, and more.

NATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION

In the Republic of Serbia, a number of documents have been adopted that define entrepreneurial education and training at all levels. Among the most important are: the Law on the Foundations of the Education System, the Law on Primary Education, the Law on Secondary Education, the Law on Adult Education, the National Youth Strategy for the period 2015–2025, the Education Development Strategy in Serbia until 2030, and the Strategy for the Development of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises for the period 2023 to 2027.



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"The Law on the Foundations of the Education System regulates the basics of preschool, primary, and secondary education and training, as well as adult education, including: principles, goals, outcomes, education and training standards, knowledge, skills, and attitudes, methods and conditions for conducting preschool education and training, primary and secondary education and training, types of education and training programs, establishment, organization, funding, and oversight of educational institutions, as well as other issues relevant to education and training" [17].

The goals of education and training encompass, among other things: the development of key competencies for lifelong learning, interdisciplinary competencies, and professional competencies in accordance with occupational requirements, labor market needs, and advancements in modern science and technology; fostering self-awareness, creativity, critical thinking, motivation for learning, teamwork abilities, self-assessment skills, initiative, and the expression of personal opinions; and developing competencies for navigating and actively participating in a changing modern society. The outcomes of education and training clearly state what is expected of students in terms of knowledge, understanding, capability to initiate and embrace change, assuming responsibility, and having an entrepreneurial approach with a clear orientation towards achieving goals and attaining success.

The Law on Primary Education and Training regulates primary education and training as part of a unified system of education and training. General interdisciplinary competencies are based on key competencies, developed through the teaching of all subjects, applicable in various situations and contexts when solving different problems and tasks, and essential for all students for personal achievement and development, participation in social processes, and employment, forming the foundation for lifelong learning. Initiative and an entrepreneurial orientation, data and information handling, problem-solving, collaboration, and digital competence are general interdisciplinary competencies expected by the end of primary education and training in the Republic of Serbia. This law facilitates the establishment of student cooperatives to foster entrepreneurial spirit, promote a positive attitude towards work among students, connect education with the world of work, and support professional orientation [18].

The Law on Secondary Education and Training mandates that school programs must include activities that promote the development of skills such as problem-solving, communication, teamwork, initiative, and entrepreneurship. Additionally, schools are required to form career guidance and counseling teams, whose role is to assist students and their parents in exploring opportunities for further education and employment. These teams provide support in identifying, selecting, and utilizing information related to professions, careers, and continued education [19].

The Law on Adult Education regulates education and lifelong learning for adults as part of a unified education system in the Republic of Serbia. Adult education provides individuals with the opportunity to acquire the competencies and qualifications necessary for personal and professional development, work, and employment, as well as for socially responsible behavior. It is based on plans and programs that enable adults to gain key and professional competencies, as well as qualifications essential for personal and professional growth, work, and employment, while encouraging socially responsible conduct. These programs assist in enhancing knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes. Both formal and non-formal adult education include, among other things, programs in entrepreneurship and management [20].

The National Youth Strategy for the period 2015–2025 establishes fundamental principles for improving the social status of young people in Serbia and creating conditions for the realization of their rights and interests in all areas. It aims to provide an environment that enables youth to fully reach their potential and actively participate in society, contributing not only to their own development but also to the development of society as a whole. One of the main goals of the National Youth Strategy is to create a favorable environment for youth development by providing access to education, employment, health



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services, and cultural content. Through these aspects, the strategy seeks to support young people in achieving their personal and professional goals while empowering them for active participation in society. Education is a key segment of the strategy, playing a central role in shaping future generations. The aim is to improve the quality of education and adapt it to the needs of the modern labor market, including the promotion of entrepreneurial education and skills.

The strategy also emphasizes the importance of employment and economic inclusion for youth. Support measures for employment, retraining, entrepreneurship, and training are designed to reduce unemployment rates among young people and create conditions for sustainable economic growth. In the area of health, the strategy aims to ensure that young people have access to quality health services and information necessary for leading a healthy life, including the promotion of mental health and the prevention of risky behaviors. Culture and sports also play an important role in the strategy, contributing to the development of creativity, identity, and social inclusion among youth. By supporting cultural and sporting activities, the strategy creates space for youth expression and active participation in social life [21].

The Strategy for the Development of Education in Serbia until 2030 is aligned with numerous national and international documents significant for the education sector. The vision for the development of education and upbringing in the Republic of Serbia is based on the continuous creation of a knowledge-based society that promotes values such as critical thinking, creativity, curiosity, solidarity, and mutual respect. This vision involves fostering personal integrity, responsibility, and respect for diversity, as well as strengthening inclusive education that ensures access to quality education for all. The goal is for the educational system to contribute to the development of a competitive economy capable of competing in the European and global markets.

The strategy emphasizes the importance of adapting the educational system to the actual needs of the labor market to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of education. Students should gain not only theoretical knowledge but also practical skills that are directly applicable in work environments. Through close cooperation with the business sector, educational institutions can identify specific skills needed and adjust their programs accordingly, enabling students to be better prepared for employment upon graduation. In this way, education becomes a tool for strengthening the economy and reducing unemployment, as young people acquire competencies that allow them to enter the labor market more quickly. Additionally, the strategy highlights the importance of dual education, a model that combines theoretical learning in schools with practical training in workplaces. This system allows students to gain real work experience during their education, making them more competitive in the job market. Dual education not only develops practical skills but also professional habits and work ethics, while employers have the opportunity to train future employees according to their needs. Such an approach allows for better alignment of supply and demand in the labor market, increasing efficiency and productivity [22].

The Strategy for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises for the period 2023-2027 consists of several segments, starting with an analysis of the current state of small and medium enterprises, changes achieved through the implementation of the strategy, analysis of options for achieving goals, measures to achieve those goals, and an analysis of their effects, as well as a risk analysis. Among the highlighted action directions are: promoting entrepreneurial spirit and supporting business newcomers, intensifying support for greater inclusivity in development. Based on the analysis of the results achieved from previous public policy documents, it can be observed that the strategic goal related to the continuous development of human resources—higher education and training—was not achieved during the planned period of 2015-2020. The SWOT analysis identifies strengths such as a relatively qualified and educated workforce and dynamic development of innovative and IT entrepreneurship, while weaknesses include insufficient commitment to developing human resources, soft skills, and knowledge.



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Threats include the formal educational system not sufficiently encouraging an entrepreneurial mindset. From all of the above and the detailed overview of the Strategy, it is clear that special attention is paid to the development of human resources from the perspective of education, and that there is room for improvement in education and training in the coming period [23].

The Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Team of the Government of the Republic of Serbia provided a comparative overview of educational policies, models, and practices in the country in 2016. The useful analysis, conducted research with students, and the conclusions drawn serve as a solid foundation for monitoring activities related to entrepreneurial education [24].

From the previously analyzed documents, it can be concluded that the importance of entrepreneurial education and training has been recognized in the Republic of Serbia. Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial learning are integral components of the strategic, legal, and sub-legal acts of various ministries and sectors, and are part of the national education system. This aims to achieve the goal of creating a competent workforce that is trained and prepared to face changes in the environment, which will contribute to new employment opportunities and, more broadly, to national economic growth through their own ideas and projects.

Entrepreneurship is a field of social activity that contributes to the development of society in all other segments. Entrepreneurship is the driving force of modern society. Although it has roots in the distant past, entrepreneurship now has a more important role than ever. Entrepreneurship is developing in parallel with technological development. It follows current trends in innovative technologies. The reason for this is the fact that the essence of entrepreneurship makes creativity and innovation [25].

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the legislative regulations of the European Union and the Republic of Serbia regarding entrepreneurial education and training shows that entrepreneurship is a key element in the development of national and global economies. Entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of continual change in economic structure and its efficiency, wherein individuals assume risks related to the outcomes of business actions. Entrepreneurial education is an indispensable process for every successful business; it involves acquiring knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are applicable not only to starting one's own business but also in various areas of life and work.

Entrepreneurial learning is integrated into the strategic and legal documents of various sectors. The development of the education system in the context of entrepreneurship in Serbia follows a comprehensive approach that links education, the labor market, and innovation. By introducing entrepreneurial education, strengthening ties with the economy, and implementing dual education, conditions are created for the development of young entrepreneurs capable of responding to the challenges of the modern market and contributing to the economic growth of the country. Innovations are crucial for economic development and competitiveness, and the education system plays a central role in fostering them. Education provides the foundation for developing creative and critical thinking, problem-solving, and research skills. The use of modern technologies in teaching enables students to master digital tools and resources, which are essential for innovations across various industries.

In this research, we established and emphasized that the Republic of Serbia, as a candidate country for EU membership, aligns its legislation and educational reforms with European standards, including entrepreneurial education as an important aspect of the education system. This paper examines the existing legal regulations, strategic documents, and initiatives from both sides, taking into account the



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challenges in implementing these strategies in Serbia. Through the analysis of entrepreneurial learning policy, the aim of this work is to identify key guidelines for further improvement of legislation and practices in the Republic of Serbia, in accordance with European norms.

The expansion of research and development capacities within educational institutions is of great significance. Support for scientific projects, scholarships for young researchers, and collaboration with industry create an environment that fosters scientific research and technological innovations. In this way, educational institutions become centers for creating new ideas and technologies, contributing to the development of new products, services, and business models that are crucial for economic growth. The Strategy for the Development of Education and Upbringing in Serbia provides a framework for transforming the education system to meet the modern needs of society and the economy. Strengthening the connection with the labor market and promoting innovation are key to building a society that values knowledge, creativity, and entrepreneurship, contributing to the sustainable development and prosperity of the country.

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