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DIFME

December 2021

Digital
Internationalisation
and Financial Literacy
Skills for
microentrepreneurs

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Empowering Microentrepreneurs to Grow & Thrive

On November 26th, 2021, DIFME partners officially launched an online SME Hub to help strengthen the financial and digital skills of micro-entrepreneurs and enable them to widen their networks and internationalise. The SME Hub serves as an open repository of solutions for entrepreneurs. Through collaborations between the DIFME project partners, practical information was collated and made accessible to entrepreneurs operating across different industries, including information on doing business in Malta, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands, relating to government agencies, banking sphere and assistance programmes, among others.

The event entitled 'Empowering Micro-Entrepreneurs to Grow and Thrive' was organised as part of DIFME – an Erasmus+ Knowledge Alliances Project led by MBB, with the participation of another 5 business partners and 5 Universities.

The hybrid conference attended by well over 100 participants was addressed by Roberta Metsola, first vice president of the European

Parliament and Josianne Cutajar, member of the European Parliament.

Metsola explained the European Parliament's work on boosting entrepreneurship and facilitating investment and trade by pushing the development of better SME financing tools and generating greater business opportunities.

On her part, Cutajar put emphasis on the challenges faced by micro-enterprises in island states like Malta, while also highlighting the critical role of funding and access to finance in helping micro-entrepreneurs get equipped with the skills they need to cope with the twin transition and the structural challenges they face.

Through an in-depth analysis of existing entrepreneurship programmes offered by HEIs in the EU and beyond, the project DIFME-Digital Internationalisation and Financial Literacy Skills for micro entrepreneurs has identified the existing gaps in microentrepreneurs skills. DIFME has developed fundamental competences related to financial literacy and entrepreneur internationalization and the necessary skills have been integrated in a curriculum adapted to the real needs of the industry.

The program has combined different learning approaches for self learning online as well as 'classroom learning' with an e-learning platform made available. The SME HUB offers comprehensive and updated information to assist both micro and larger entrepreneurs learn about, build and internationalise their businesses. Partners have collaborated to collect and distribute all useful information (knowledge, government and other relevant assistance programmes) on national and European level. The project has promoted cooperation between education organisations and entrepreneurs with online events to raise awareness and reaching stakeholders across Europe in English, German, Greek, Dutch, Italian and Bulgarian.

The DIFME project addressed major aims and priorities of the Erasmus+ Knowledge Alliances program scheme. Knowledge Alliances aim at strengthening Europe's innovation capacity and at fostering innovation in higher education, business, and the broader socio-economic environment. They intended to achieve this through the development of new, innovative, and multidisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning; stimulating the entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial skills of higher education teaching staff and company staff; and facilitating the exchange, flow, and co-creation of knowledge. The project was focused on stimulating entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial skills of higher education

teaching staff and company staff and develop an entrepreneurial mind-set and related skills in higher education students and microentrepreneurs. DIFME was a transnational, structured, and result-driven project, which included five universities and six business entities located in countries where micro enterprise already plays a significant role, but where there are also common needs of more training requirements to meet internationalisation demand and expectations. The Eleven partners share common goals in improving teaching process; developing research, and enlarging and enhancing international cooperation and worked together towards mutually beneficial results and outcomes

MBB president Alison Mizzi said: "We have seen the digital transformation of the workplace outpacing educational institutions as well as the labour market itself, leading to skills shortages in several sectors. For this reason, the EU must continue facilitating cooperation among member states' authorities and educational institutions and the private sector to address key challenges by micro-enterprises."

MBB project manager Marika Huber said: "Whether you are kicking off your enterprise or scaling up, the SME Hub will provide you with the tools and resources you need to make informed decisions regarding your financial and internationalisation well-being now and in the future."

At the end of the conference, the DIFME project partners signed a memorandum of cooperation, thus confirming their intention to develop further activities and maximise the outputs achieved throughout the last three years of project implementation.

The DIFME project was selected from a number of submissions presented to the EACEA under the call for Knowledge Alliances Erasmus – Project Reference 600834-EPP-1-2018-1-MT-EPPKA2-KA.

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

