

Creative in Diversity: Developing Entrepreneurial Talents in European University Networks – Experiences from an Intercultural, (Blended-) Team-Learning Opportunity.

*Matthias Eickhoff, University of Applied Sciences Mainz, School of Business,
Matthias.Eickhoff@wiwi.fh-mainz.de, corresponding author
University of Applied Sciences Mainz
Lucy-Hillebrand-Str. 2
55128 Mainz, Germany
T +49.170.2382859
F +49.6131.628-93273*

*Tomasz Dyczkowski, Wroclaw University of Economics, Department of Controlling,
Tomasz.Dyczkowski@ue.wroc.pl*

Abstract 150 words

The paper introduces the idea, pillars and methodology of COEUR Competence in EuroPreneurship which started in 2004 as a weekly course for students to develop a value proposition with visionary strength and European scope in intercultural teams. On the basis of the workshop experience and with EU-support, the COEUR Business Creativity Module was introduced into regular university curricula (blended learning). The feedback of the students to COEUR was equally encouraging as the inspiring experience which workshops in China and Brazil contributed, deepening the understanding of entrepreneurial culture and development processes. Going beyond regular evaluation after every workshop, a career tracking has started to find out how former participants evaluate the lessons learned with a distance and how this influenced their further professional development. The paper highlights the relevance of COEUR for SMEs, it invites universities to join the network and offers strategic partnership to enterprises to foster innovative entrepreneurial learning.

1. Introduction – the Assumptions to the Competence in EuroPreneurship Project (COEUR)

The foundations for entrepreneurship theory and educational methodology were laid by American universities and institutions in the early seventies of the twentieth century. Those concepts are generally considered global standards or at least global ‘best-practices’. It does not mean, however, that the American models are universal or flexible enough to address problems of any economy of the world. Business initiatives and activities are strongly conditioned by local factors and therefore entrepreneurship should not be treated as a homogeneous phenomenon on a global scale (Eickhoff 2005).

Specific features and potential of the European market resulted in developing European entrepreneurship culture – defined as ‘EuroPreneurship’ (see Eickhoff, Jakob 2005) – which fuses global standardization tendencies, with local entrepreneurial behaviour. The

EuroPreneurial culture on one hand poses a challenge for entrepreneurs but on the other creates opportunities to new businesses and value added to existing ones (Eickhoff 2005).

Despite being recognized, the problems that EuroPreneurs have to face have not been sufficiently addressed yet. The survey conducted by the European Foundation for Entrepreneurship Research (EFER) among 240 entrepreneurship teachers in Europe in summer 2004 showed that although there had been a noticeable development in teaching methodology of entrepreneurship since the year 2000, a lot needed to be improved. In particular hands-on, action-oriented and interdisciplinary approaches were scarce (Wilson, K. 2004).

In this context the idea of organizing an international meeting for students of various majors emerged. The objective of the workshop was to build competence in European entrepreneurship by developing innovative business concepts with visionary strength and European scope. In 2004 a network of four universities from Germany (University of Applied Sciences Mainz), Poland (Wroclaw University of Economics), Portugal (ISCTE Lisbon University Institute) and Scotland (Robert-Gordon-University, Aberdeen) initiated the 1st Idea Generation Workshop on EuroPreneurship in Mainz, still called '1. International Students Conference on EuroPreneurship' COEUR (Eickhoff 2005). The COEUR annual events were successfully repeated at Partner Institutions in Scotland (2005), Poland (2006), Portugal (2007), France (2008/9), and Germany (2011). In these years the network grew and integrated new partners: Burgundy Business School ESC, Dijon (F), the Institute of Finance and Administration, Prague (CZ), Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen (NL), HAAGA-HELIA, Helsinki (FIN) and the University of Applied Sciences, Erfurt (D) and Tallinn University of Technology (EST). In 2009 and 2010 COEUR workshops were held at the Nanfang College of Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou (CHN) and the University of Santa Catarina UNISUL, Florianopolis (BR) to experience EuroPreneurship from a global perspective: COEUR-Mundus.

Based on results of research projects run within the COEUR project and a thorough evaluation of the concept performed by participants of every COEUR workshop a comprehensive set of methodological assumptions used to foster competencies necessary for EuroPreneurs of the future was developed (see Eickhoff, Müller 2006 or Turnbull, Eickhoff 2011).

1. Despite economic, legal and cultural differences there exists a set of interdisciplinary and pan-European behavioural traits encouraging entrepreneurial thinking, which can be educated, and should support the learning processes in all disciplines of study.
2. Young Europeans share values, aspirations and outlooks and these common features are much more important than any differences.
3. The essential elements of a European entrepreneurship education include: creative problem defining and solving, self-responsible work as well as intercultural and team competencies.
4. The basic concept of COEUR workshops is to develop entrepreneurial ideas in intercultural teams, acting in an inspiring educational environment.
5. The COEUR annual events aim at bringing together students and staff from different European countries to enable an understanding of the European Market from various perspectives.

6. The COEUR workshops contribute to employability of students by providing them with key entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial competencies and intercultural experiences required from future European businesspeople.
7. The COEUR concept applies also blended learning approach, which integrates diverse learning methods. This is operationalized through: multicultural teamwork, experimental learning, team coaching, sharing experience by entrepreneurs and professionals, presentation and feedback cycles and inspiring supplementary – often outdoor – activities, including: cultural, socializing and sport events

Effects resulting from applying the foregoing methodology will be identified in this paper.

2. COEUR Workshops in Practice – Evaluation of the Methodology

In the first two years of developing the COEUR - Competence in EuroPreneurship project students and academics from four COEUR Partner Universities (Aberdeen, Lisbon, Mainz and Wroclaw, together Dijon in the second edition) participated in successful events organized in Germany and Scotland. As declared by all Polish participants of those workshops, those were unforgettable experiences due to the friendly atmosphere created by the hosts and their tremendous involvement in organizing the events. But beyond that both workshops offered their participants an opportunity to develop their entrepreneurial visions and to gain experience in cross-cultural team working. The level of the events was very high and each next host had to face a challenge to continue the mission to provide students with creative and entrepreneurial competencies and, at the same time, to improve methodology of the workshop.

The third COEUR workshop was organized in 2006 at Wroclaw University of Economics, Poland. The organizing team – including the co-author of this paper – set the following two educational goals for the event. Firstly, the participants should have become acquainted with the business environment of Middle Eastern Europe. And secondly, they ought to scrutinize their concepts with respect to possibilities to transfer them into successful real businesses, which can first survive and ultimately flourish at a competitive and saturated European Market.

The first objective was formulated based on the assumption that despite the existence of the Common European Market there is no universal recipe for an entrepreneurial success. Europe is an attractive area for start-ups due to its diversity. In this respect the participants of COEUR 2006 were made familiar with specific business environment of Poland, by recognizing conditions for investment in special economic zones – which are primary locations for foreign investors. In addition representative of municipal authorities of the Lower Silesia region were asked to explain what kind of support foreign entrepreneurs could expect when they invested in the region.

The intention to turn students' entrepreneurial ideas into profitable businesses or effective social projects was fostered by integrating entrepreneurs, business experts and representatives of local authorities into the commission which evaluated the final presentations of value propositions. It was assumed that participant would receive more credible – and perhaps critical – assessment of their concepts not from those who are used to evaluate students' work

with respect to the learning outcomes, but rather from businesspeople who risk with their own money, business consultants, or officers who decide about public support to investors developing their companies in a certain region.

Proper formulation of the program of the workshop was the key factor which enabled fulfilment of the forgoing goals and helped to achieve the fundamental objective of the COEUR workshop i.e. to develop competencies in business creativity in a stimulating learning environment.

The opening day of the workshop introduced students to the business environment of Poland, by presenting Sitech – a part of the Volkswagen group – which operated in the special economic sub-zone in vicinity of the city of Polkowice. For international students this was an opportunity to learn how a Polish company assimilated the business culture of the German automotive concern. The students were also familiarized with the backstage of an innovative production company, and gained insights into design and production processes as well as into introducing new standards of human resources management. The day was concluded by workshops dealing with personal development, innovativity and starting own business with support of entrepreneurship incubators.

The following day transferred the workshop to a quiet village – Przesieka – in Karkonosze mountains. The assumption for selecting such a destination was to stimulate participants' creativity by separating them from distracting factors of the big city. Before the destination was reached, another visit to a special economic zone – near industrial city of Wałbrzych – was organized, which made students acquainted with profiles of foreign enterprises which located their plants in that investment site.

The first team working session was dedicated to brain storming activities. The teams, not yet fully integrated, had limited time to produce, select and develop the first concepts, which were to be presented to the panel consisting of all team coaches the next morning. Traditionally, the first presentations had to undergo critical evaluation. 'The jury' pointed out lack of problem definition and missing target audiences of many offers. Without such key factors, even the most sophisticated marketing campaigns may not guarantee an expected market reaction. The presentation session was followed by individual discussions with team coaches, who – this time – encouraged teams to convert weaknesses of particular concepts into strong points or modified offers.

An ability to look at the ideas from a new perspective is an inherent element of the COEUR workshop. Socializing and outdoor activities, when a focus is temporarily reverted from objectives and deadlines, play an important role in this respect. The best example for such activities are cultural presentations prepared by all students participating in the event. Cultural understanding resulting from this task is an additional benefit, as students can find inspiration in other cultures but also become aware of elements of their own national heritage that are attractive to other nations.

The final part of the workshop - organized in a more business-like environment - consisted in presenting value propositions to a jury of entrepreneurs, business experts and representatives of local authorities. In the described edition the idea contest comprised seven 7-minute long presentations, which were immediately commented on by the experts. Final presentations are always the most emotional part of the COEUR workshop. The new location, a formal atmosphere, external jury and competition with other teams make the final result a

combination of quality of the idea and ability to act in stressful conditions. Well-structured and objective-oriented presentations together with passionate performance appear to be a key to the ultimate success. It should be pointed out that business people were impressed by quality of the ideas, which were not perceived as ‘student projects’ but as actual preparation to launching new businesses. The appreciation was even higher when the jury realized that the concepts were developed within four days by multicultural teams, whose members met for the first time at COEUR.

The effectiveness of the presented blended-learning approach was proved by results of a questionnaire organized for participants of the workshop, where the following four elements were assessed:

- organizational issues, including: location of the workshop, accommodation and subsistence as well as support of the organizing team;
- attractiveness and usefulness of particular points of the programme;
- contribution of the workshop to one’s personal development, including development of entrepreneurial, team working and intercultural competencies;
- an overall impression of the event, including relation between its effects and participation cost.

Each participant evaluated the aforementioned element within the 5-grade scale, where ‘1’ meant ‘a failure’, whereas ‘5’ represented the ‘complete success’. Considering particular points of the program, the most positive feedback was attributed to the ‘cultural evening’, when all national teams introduced their cultures. The satisfaction ratio reached the impressive level of 96,3 %. The reason for that was personal and emotional contribution of all students to that event together with a very interactive form of ‘presentations’. The second place was taken by another point of the program which emotionally integrated all the participants i.e. the final presentations of value propositions to the professional jury (with satisfaction rate of 89,4 %). That was a proof for educational effect of the workshop. Even critical remarks of the jury or disappointment of the teams who took last places in the idea contest did not change positive reception of that event.

It is worth noticing that the stressful moment of presentations was ultimately perceived more positively than entertaining points of the program, including the mountain trip to the medieval castle, discovering the city of Wroclaw or even the farewell party. Among all points of the program related to entrepreneurship only visits in special economic zones and companies located there were seen as less beneficial (with 60% satisfaction ratios). Too little interaction was negatively affecting participants’ opinions on benefits of those events.

The effects of the workshop should be also measured by investigating to what extent students gained or developed certain competencies, which may be needed in their future business career. The survey showed, that intercultural character of the workshop was its biggest strength. The ratio describing level of acquiring intercultural competence reached 4,62 on a 5-point scale. In case of team working skills the level reached 4,25, whereas development of entrepreneurial competencies was assessed for 4,2 points on average. All the results prove that the concept of COEUR workshop is not only attractive, but above all, brings expected educational effects. In overall, the satisfaction from participating in the workshop exceeded

90% threshold, and in terms of the cost-benefit relation it reached the level of 88,1%, what meant that organizational efforts paid off.

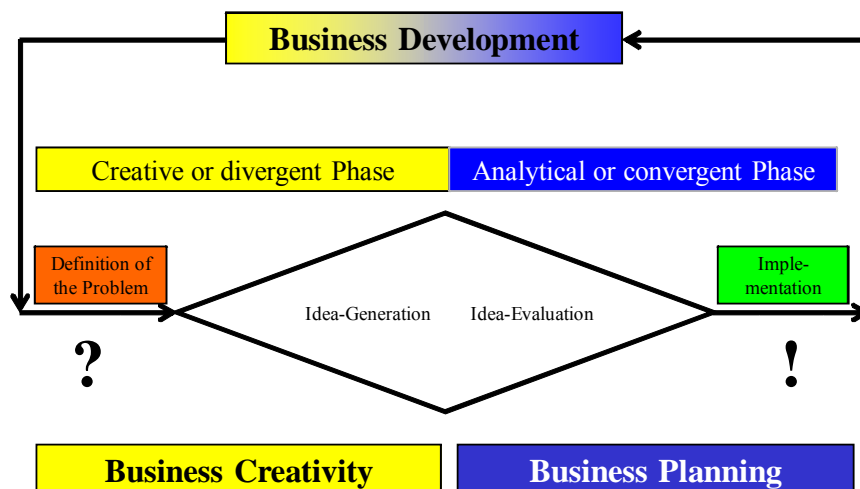
3. Developing EuroPreneurial Competencies within the University Course Framework

The COEUR Idea Generation Workshop analysed in the previous part of the paper triggered a discussion on possibilities to integrate more students into that educational project. In effect, an initiative to develop an academic course on business creativity, incorporating fundamental values of COUER emerged. The discussion on possibilities and limitations of transferring a 5-day workshops into academic curricula, without losing benefits of teamwork, interaction and multicultural dimension evolved into a Business Creativity Module offered in a semi-virtual environment. The whole project was developed with the support of the European Commission grant within the framework of the Erasmus Curriculum Development program. In this respect the following section will present how a COEUR workshop methodology was adopted to mitigate limitations imposed by a format of a university course.

Business planning has always been focused on in entrepreneurship education and still remains one of the most frequently used tools. Significance of business planning is globally accepted, as its efficiency was proved both by theoretical studies and in practical applications. Consequently, a lot of successful activities and events have been established in this area. Nevertheless there appear opinions that successful entrepreneurial development is a far more complex phenomenon. A shift of focus is considered necessary. “If we accept the necessity to place more importance on opportunity recognition and development by the student then we should provide more room for creativity development” (Carrier 2005, p.137).

From the very beginning COEUR has been referring to a theoretical concept of the business evolution process, which is understood as a cycle comprising three phases: Business Creativity, Business Planning and Business Development (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Business Evolution Process



Source: [Eickhoff, Jakob, 2005]

Business Creativity consists in a definition of a problem for which creative solutions need to be invented and developed. The challenge before the creative phase is to find an actual problem – and this is by no means trivial. Entrepreneurs looking for easy paths have lots of followers and will unlikely establish extraordinary successful businesses. And worse: entrepreneurs which are solving ‘problems’ which nobody in the market really has will lose their business just after a short period in the market. Bankruptcy is predetermined.

Creative output needs to be controlled. Therefore the question of finding appropriate methods and tools stimulating and steering the creative process has to be dealt with. If business creativity is to be educated, than it is indispensable to gain proofs that creativity is not an in-born capacity, but it can be enhanced with appropriate training. It should be also demonstrated that ideas developed with help of a ‘creativity toolbox’ are of sufficient quality. The third thing is to prove that thanks to appropriate idea selection chances for success increase (Kardasz, Dyczkowski 2009, p. 37).

The second stage of the business evolution process is business planning, which helps to evaluate and implement ideas invented at the first stage. The major challenge is to assess the economic viability of an idea – which means that it is both feasible, and that it will be accepted by customers to such extent that the costs of creative efforts – as well as all the running costs and overheads – are covered. Potential resistance of a market to innovation has to be thoroughly analysed. The business planning stage is ultimately followed by the business development process which consists in monitoring and further developing of the business model, to use its potential to the full. The assumption is that entrepreneurs who are regularly thinking about the further development of their business, reinventing the business model when and where necessary, will be significantly more successful than if they just go on to continue the successful business.

At the stage of formulating the COEUR concept, it became evident that this project would not add another business plan related activities to existing entrepreneurship education offers. Therefore COEUR focused on the phase before Business Planning – the initial, fuzzy phase of problem definition and creative idea development and attempted to structure it: Business Creativity.

The objective of COEUR in this respect is to formulate a value propositions for a business, a social innovation or a bridge ‘from here to there’. This objective is achieved by placing culturally mixed students in virtual teams (i.e. working on-line), which operate in challenging working conditions – in terms of requirements, time limits and competition – and make them manage the creative process on their own. This way team members are the only responsible people for an ultimate success or a failure of each team. This approach embodies the following idea “managers do things right, leaders do the right things.” (Bennis, W. and Nanus, B. 1997). Entrepreneurs are not primarily task- and rule-oriented managers, who stigmatize mistakes, but leaders, who are vision- and result-oriented and treat each experience – including mistakes – as lessons learned.

By emphasizing the stage of problem definition, Business Creativity Module lays foundations on which EuroPreneurs will build their future: creativity competencies, which are essential for the ability of companies to deal with unpredictable changes in their environment. While contemporary companies are well prepared to react to deterministic changes or to adapt to predictable ones proactively, there seems to be little competency of creative problem-solving

in a chaotic surrounding (Eickhoff, Jakob, 2005), which became evident e.g. with the climate-change, during the recent financial crisis or after the earth-quake, tsunami and Fukushima reactor meltdown.

The Business Creativity Module (BCM) classes – in a form of a pilot project, which was not yet incorporated in the regular educational offers of participating institutions – were initiated in the winter term of the academic year 2007/2008. The subsequent four editions were provided in a form of elective courses targeted mainly at Erasmus students. They involved up to 30 hours of in-class activities and another 30 hours of on-line team work, and equipped their participants with 5 ECTS credits. Variations with respect to particular Partner Universities were common, though.

It should be emphasized that BCM methodology resigns from a typical model of academic instruction, where a teacher provides knowledge, evaluates students and grades them. Both presentation aids and team reports are assessed by two teachers instructing BCM at different Partner Universities. Both assessments need to be substantiated with arguments which help to reconcile opinions. Ultimate differences between scores of both teachers must not exceed 20% of points attributed to particular element which is evaluated. In case of final presentations of business ideas the points are given, as already mentioned, by the independent jury. This way, efforts of students are not targeted at preferences of single teachers, but have to be accepted by a broad range of people. Unfortunately, this usually implies lower grades than in ordinary courses, but does not reduce satisfaction from work accomplished.

Despite forgoing challenges related to participation in Business Creativity Module, including complexity of assignments and multidimensional evaluation procedure, the course is positively perceived by students participating in it at each partner university. In this respect evaluation of participants' satisfaction is essential for improving methodology of a course and exchanging experience between partner institutions.

The satisfaction ratio reached values of 5,30 for Polish students and 5,62 among Erasmus ones on a 7-grade scale – where '1' meant 'completely unfulfilled expectations', and '7' that they were entirely fulfilled. As for comparison with other subjects the results were even more positive. The results were 5,90 for Polish participants and 6,31 for Erasmus students, on the same scale.

Despite the fact that the analysed second full edition of Business Creativity Module incorporated certain adjustments related to the course structure, which resulted from problems identified in pilot runs, some methodological deficiencies were still noticeable to students. The most frequently raised issues dealt with inefficient communication in virtual teams, which resulted both from on-line communication and unequal commitment of particular team members to the group work. However, technical issues were – according to team coaches' observations – a frequent excuse for not responding to team mates questions or for inactivity in team meetings.

It should be pointed out that in BCM methodology course instructors create only a framework for teamwork, but the work progress results from teams' independent decisions – what is a rare situation in academic environment. The teams were offered centralized communication time, when team coaches were also available, and had to face certain deadlines. However, schedule of work and task assignment were managed by teams themselves. This resulted from the conviction that both necessity to work under time pressure and unequal contribution of

team members are problems which have to be solved by teams themselves as an essential part of the learning process. Nevertheless, suggestions of students caused that in subsequent editions the teams were asked to formulate their internal codes of conduct, which could help to solve problems or entitle team coaches to intervene, if the code is constantly violated by a team member.

The second major problem raised by the students was related to evaluation of quality of the concepts, and in particular to finding balance between creative elements of an idea and feasibility of a concept. Although both elements were incorporated in the assessment methodology, there appeared certain differences in evaluating concepts in particular countries, also due to different composition of the jury panels. A serious gap between expectations of academics and businesspeople in this respect was noticeable. The first group tended to prefer concepts, where students showed high degree on future-oriented thinking, whereas the latter prioritized operational issues.

The aforementioned problem has no obvious solution, as on the one hand, COEUR/BCM projects were founded on the assumption that creativity must not be constrained. Without letting minds 'go out of the box' student will prefer 'safe' approaches, with reduced innovative aspects. On the other hand, a practical attitude which emphasizes that 'too visionary' concepts will not be transferred into successful businesses, and remain only 'academic projects' cannot be ignored.

A compromise in this respect requires supporting independent thinking at the first phase of idea generation, to avoid situations when team ideas are based on a first interesting 'googled' concept. At the second stage of the idea generation process a question of feasibility should be focused on. This does not imply producing a business plan but focusing on examining market needs. In addition, while preparing their final presentations teams should make a deliberate choice in which area of creativity they locate their concepts. This could be closer to a visionary thinking or closer to operational efficiency. Finding a right balance becomes a part of a learning process.

Summing up the effectiveness analysis on the Business Creativity Module it should be pointed out, that the major objective of the course – that is to stimulate creative thinking – was fulfilled mostly in those cases where students were satisfied with their personal contribution to the final shape of the idea generated by a team. In situations when participants did not fully support team decisions, or their own ideas were rejected an increase of own creative skills was not mentioned. Whatever the situation was, nearly all the students declared to benefit from the teamwork. A level of interaction between BCM participants, which is much higher, than in case of other academic courses appeared to be a key success factor of the module. Developing soft skills, in form of intercultural understanding, ability to present one's ideas in public or to communicate effectively in English were other positive results of the course.

4. Scrutinizing EuroPreneurship from the Global Perspective – the COUER Mundus Concept

Each of the five editions of COEUR workshops, although took part in another European country and presented cultural or economic backgrounds of the hosting country, emphasized the priority of the pan-European entrepreneurial environment over the national level

(Eickhoff, Turnbull 2011). This stemmed from the conviction, that as the diversity of Europe is noticeable to European citizens, the 'outside world' perceive the Old Continent as a 'confederacy'. It is always the European Union or the European Market in the first place, and Germany, France, Great Britain etc. in the second (Kardasz, Dyczkowski 2009, pp.37-38).

This conviction lead to enthusiastic reaction to the opportunity of extending a discussion on the EuroPreneurship on interactions between the European Market and the strongest economy of Asia – the People's Republic of China. The first basic argument for such 'expansion' was the fact that as the European market was saturated, EuroPreneurs would look for their opportunities beyond Europe. The second, and far more important, reason was that by focusing exclusively on Europe the COEUR/BCM project was in threat of being limited by too uniform European business education model (Kardasz, Dyczkowski 2009, p.38).

The international workshop organized in 2009 in co-operation with the Nanfang College of Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou aimed at breaking that limitations by facing business cultures of Europe and China. The major assumption for the COEUR 2009 workshop was to look beyond European entrepreneurial behaviour marked by common organizational, financial and marketing concepts. If future EuroPreneurs in course of their education use the same literature, analyse the same case studies, and develop the same business models, then there is no possibility to avoid similar visions, ideas and solutions. By experiencing cultural differences a chance to discover new business opportunities of very high potential was opened (Kardasz, Dyczkowski 2009, p.38). In these respect it is worth evaluating – from the perspective of team coaches, who monitored group work and evaluated work progress – what was the impact of intercultural elements on quality of entrepreneurial concepts developed by the teams. This analysis would help to determine whether a decision for the COEUR workshops to expand was the right one.

During the workshop 11 creative concepts were developed. They represented the whole spectrum of business and non-commercial ideas, such as: organization of European-style celebrations for Chinese students (Cultural Interacting Fun), cultural festivals in major European cities (Cultural Olympics), electronic meta-newspaper (Unity iNews), multinational restaurants (My Zone), herbal cigarettes (Healthurette), student-employer intermediary offices (T.O.B.), chopsticks recycling (GREEN Creations), ready vegetarian meals (All Good), Chinese cultural centres (China Centre), heated underwear (H.O.T.) or a portable text scanner and translator (Genius Translator).

The cultural dimension of particular projects was recognized on the base of various symptoms to be noticed in presentations of value propositions and in information materials prepared to promote each concept. These included: direct mentioning of cultural orientation, use of native words or expressions, reference to national symbols, presentation of people – including celebrities – who are unambiguously associated with particular countries or use of music typical for certain cultures in presentations. Identification of cultural dimension enabled to recognize dominant features of the two cultural environments (table 1).

Considering entrepreneurial challenge, different approaches were adapted in oriental and European concepts. The European methodology involved problem-recognition and solving style, the good example of which was T.O.B. If students need experience or money, and small and medium-sized companies need to cut cost, the 'obvious' answer is to create a student-employer intermediary office. This approach is characterized by a possibility of quick commercialization of an offer without much effort spent on developing the base for a

company. The oriental approach, on the contrary, seemed to be more open and evolving. For example the Genius Translator was first meant to help Chinese students to recognize English words, but soon became a multi-task device containing printed and handwritten text scanner, Chinese characters recognition software and voice-dictionaries – everything in the portable, pocket device. This complexity implies longer preparatory phase for necessary research, prototyping, product testing, what means that such idea is rather a long-term vision than ready solution (Kardasz, Dyczkowski 2009, pp.39-40).

Table 1. Cultural Profile of COEUR 2009 Concepts

Element	Asian Profile	European Profile
Problem definition	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'Open concept' with focus on opportunities 2. Long-term vision based on solutions which need to be developed (longer introductory phase) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'Closed concept' with focus on problem identification and solving 2. Immediate results based on combination of existing solutions (shorter introductory phase)
Solution	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Domination of product-oriented ideas 4. Focus on new technologies or arts 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Domination of services-oriented ideas 4. Focus on entertainment or communication
Business model	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Private financing 6. For-profit orientation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Consideration of public support 6. Non-profit orientation (to some extent)
Commercialization	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Strong emotional load and enthusiasm 8. High input of creativity and artistic imagination 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Careful business planning 8. Trust in marketing techniques

Source: (Kardasz, Dyczkowski 2009, p.39).

In respect to value proposition, the oriental approach was characterized by focus on hi-tech products. The best examples were heated underwear, which involved heat absorbing material, and the aforementioned text scanner. This fascination in technology and conviction that technology is the panacea for any problem seems to stem from the fact, that the Chinese society made a jump over the technological revolution. When in Europe products employing certain technologies were first adjusted then improved and finally – when obsolete – replaced by next models, in China the most recent technology may be the first in use, and the technological advance is therefore more visible. The other factor that contributes to the described situation is a global transfer of production to China. If the vast majority of electronic devices is produced in China, then such offer is dominant for this business culture. In European business style, where key resource is information and resource in scarce is time, young entrepreneurs offer either information services (T.O.B. or Unity iNews) or pay attention to organizing free time (Cultural Olympics, Cultural Interacting Fun) (Kardasz, Dyczkowski 2009, p.40).

When a business model is analysed the oriental approach appears much more commercially oriented than the European one. Asian entrepreneurs were perceived as people, who accept the whole financial risk for the idea development, with the intention to create a profitable company. In highly competitive and rapidly developing market such as Chinese this determination for success is extremely important. The European business model involves some elements of social entrepreneurship, which intends to increase the standard of stakeholders' lives. In such a situation profit maximization is not being prioritized. On the other hand this non-commercial approach seems to be a safe one, as it enables social entrepreneurs look for financial support from public sources – mostly EU programmes – in order to finance their ideas, what considerably reduces financial burden on entrepreneurs related to investment and development processes. The side effect may be, however, that it becomes unclear whether such projects as Cultural Olympics, Cultural Interacting Fun or

T.O.B. are able to survive on their own or must rely on different kinds of sponsorship and financial support, what affects their feasibility (Kardasz, Dyczkowski, 2009, p.40).

With regard to converting ideas into marketable offer the analysis of COEUR 2009 entrepreneurial ideas demonstrated different approaches to building customer and investor relations. The European oriented projects tended to treat commercialization phase as a process which has to be well designed and conducted according to the pre-defined scenario. The customers appeared as consumers who need products and services, and the main task of a company is to draw people's attention to particular offer by using appealing market communication tools and methods. Such attitude poses, however, risk that actual customers' needs may be not prioritized on. Such project as herbal cigarettes (Healthette) proved this thesis. The customers do not want to substitute cigarettes with their 'healthier' equivalents, but to reduce their stress and keep healthy at the same time. In this respect the oriental ideas demonstrated, on the contrary, more emotional and emphatic approach to entrepreneurship. The text scanner was therefore presented not as a 'cool gadget' but as a life buoy to enable communication in the most difficult situations or as a magic wand that makes interpersonal barriers disappear. In addition, an artistic style of market communication was a consequence of endeavour to create not a product, but the visionary, quality, well-designed solution (Kardasz, Dyczkowski 2009, p. 40).

Obviously, the limited number of projects, and the subjective identification of cultural traits, cause that described cultural profiles must not be treated as universal. They will act, however, as a reference to observe idea development processes in next editions of COEUR workshops where students from outside Europe participate. This should enable to incorporate global challenges to the EuroPreneurial COEUR workshop.

5. Conclusion – Relevance for SMEs and perspectives of COEUR projects

When focus was put on "The War for Talent" (Michaels, Handfield-Jones, Axelrod, 2001) creativity and diversity were seen to be amongst the driving forces of future success. "Creative in Diversity" indeed is the claim of the COEUR programmes. When COEUR was set up in 2004 one initial idea was founded on the experience to administrate a newly founded Business Angels Network in the Federal State of Rhineland Palatinate, in Mainz. The experience showed, that if interesting ideas were brought to the market, the chance that they find financial support was relatively good. The problem for the Business Angels was to find interesting ideas. COEUR – striving to develop entrepreneurial ideas - and the Business Angels thus appeared to be true-born partners in their interest. This proximity was also manifested by the fact that the first final presentation at the end of the COEUR Workshop in 2004 was held within the annual meeting of the Business Angels Network Germany (BAND) which was held at the same time in Mainz (Eickhoff 2005).

Nevertheless and not contradicting this view, several lessons have been learned:

- The performance and success of the concept cannot only be measured in numbers of start-up-entrepreneurs who realize their business idea after the participation but rather in long term orientation and competencies

- The COEUR programmes are different from traditional business and entrepreneurship education in many respects and they offer unique and innovative opportunities for sustainable development in a changing world
- COEUR offers these opportunities to all participants, students, coaches and universities, and as feedback says, also directly to the participating entrepreneurs in a cooperative model rather than a top-down approach
- The primary ‘products’ of the COEUR programmes are people.

COEUR is contributing to the development of future competences of the participants. Many large corporations have started to focus creativity, diversity in and intrapreneurship in their role as facilitators of change and to act against the war for talents since a longer time. SMEs are in a more difficult situation for different structural reasons including market access, organizational capacities or availability of resources. The COEUR program’s output may provide assistance and support in this field.

Before the first COEUR workshop the expected benefits for students were formulated as follows

- Learn European entrepreneurial challenges
- Find and develop new ideas
- Learn in intercultural teams
- Practice entrepreneurial networking
- Experience blended learning and cooperation
- Experience project management
- Experience creativity hands on.

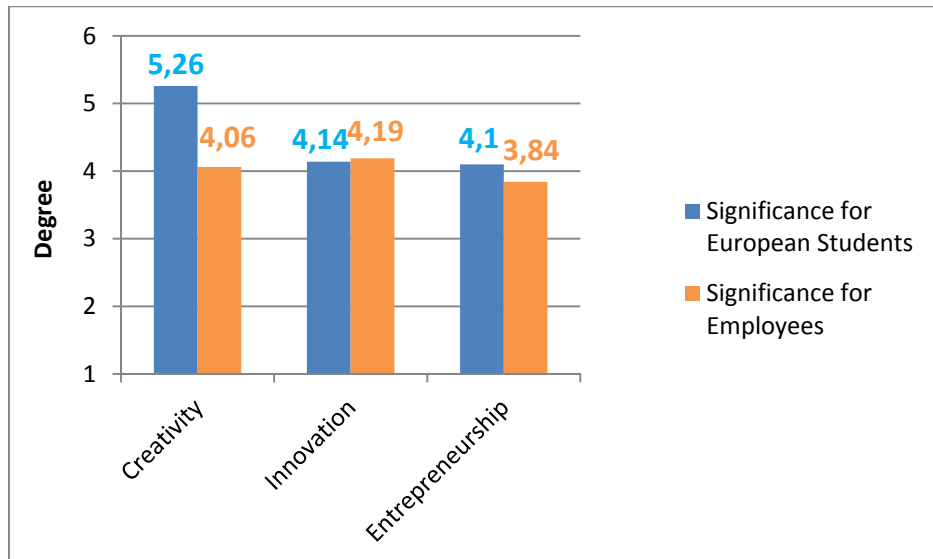
In the period of January 3rd - March 3rd 2012 a web-based survey was conducted in order to receive information on the former COEUR participants’ perception of entrepreneurship and the effects of the programme on their professional career. With over 70 persons having answered to the questionnaire, a respondent rate of 37% of the former participants who could still be identified was achieved (Schwarz 2012): 51% of them were employees, 36% finalized their studies at university, 9% had started a business as entrepreneurs and 4% were not yet employed.

The following results outline the output of the COEUR-programmes for the participating students. The significance of creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship was evaluated as being very high; the average respond on a scale between 1 (not important at all) and 6 (very important) reached 5.26 related to creativity, 4.14 related to innovation, and 4.10 related to entrepreneurship (Fig. 1).

Schwarz points out: “It is remarkable that the former participants do have a clear understanding of the terms ‘creativity’ and ‘innovation’. The statements regarding the high rankings often include the assumption that a creative mind-set and the ability to apply creativity methods can lead to innovation, which build the driving force in the strong competition of today’s dynamic markets (16 persons). Additionally, creativity is regarded as an immense beneficial asset for Europe as an economic region in order to stay ahead of the

competitors (5 persons) and to meet the cheap work force of abroad (2 persons).” (Schwarz, 2012, p 35).

Figure 2. The Significance of Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship for COEUR Participants and Employers



Source: [Schwarz, 2012, p. 34]

The extent of gaining competences before the start of the programme which was expected by the participants showed diverse rankings: the competence of intercultural team work (4.14), the competence of creative thinking (3.74), the competence in international networking (3.69), the competence of entre- and intrapreneurship (3.6), the improvement of language skills (3.43), presentation skills (3.07), the self-organisation of a process (3.06) and the ability to develop a value proposition (1.76).

Figure 3. The Evaluation of the Expected and Gained Competences in the Field of COEUR

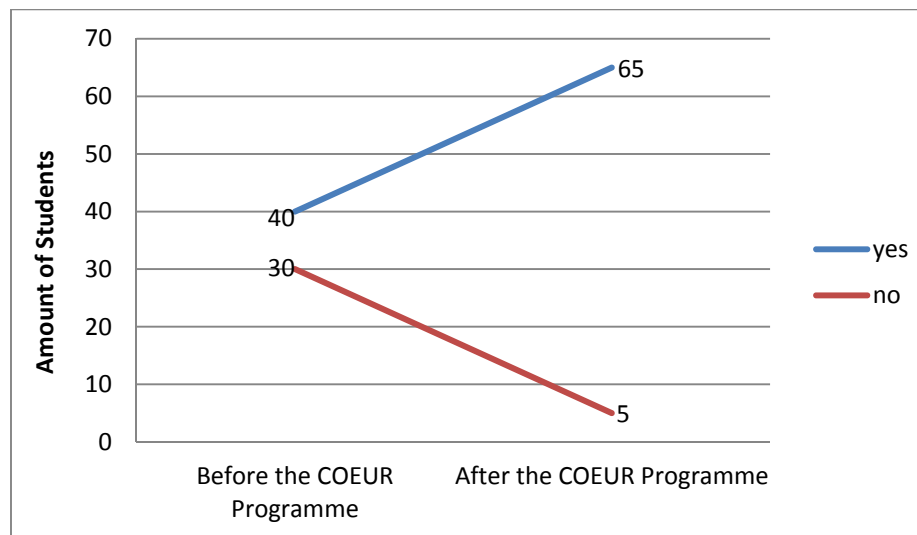


Source: [Schwarz, 2012, p. 36]

The extent to which the competences were gained in a post-perspective manner exceeds the expected extent in all fields: the competence of intercultural team work (4.47), the competence in international networking (4.27), the improvement of language skills (3.99), the ability to develop a value proposition (3.99), the competence of creative thinking (3.97), the competence of entre- and intrapreneurship (3.96), presentation skills (3.77), the self-organisation of a process (3.73)

The significance of entrepreneurship could be transmitted to all respondents: The amount of students who realise that the issue of entrepreneurship is significant could be raised from 18 before the start of the programme to 37 during and 9 after the program; furthermore, 6 respondents recognised the significance in practice at work; there is no one who did not acknowledge the significance of entrepreneurship.

Figure 4. The Amount of Students Considering the Option of Becoming an Entrepreneur Before and After the COEUR Programme



Source: [Schwarz, 2012, p. 37]

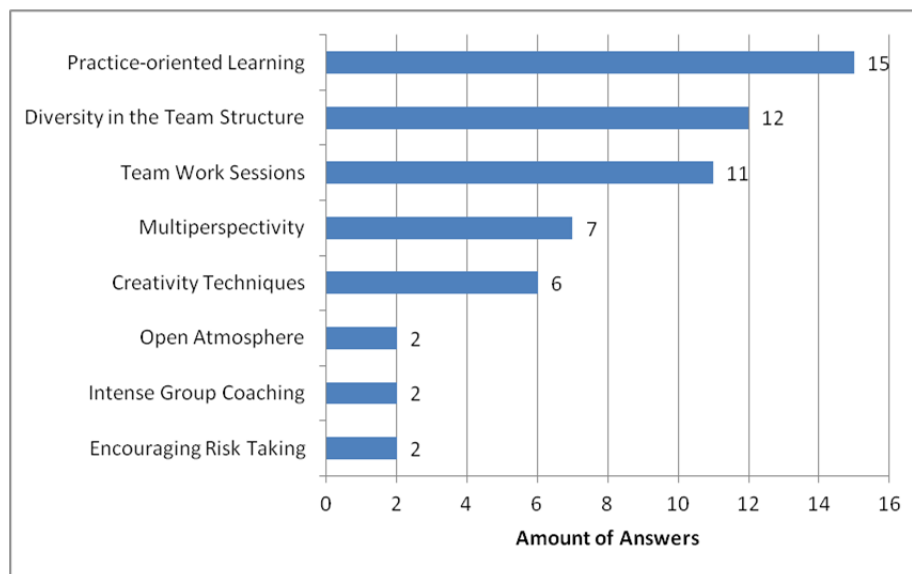
The programme had a high influence on the participants' orientation towards the option of becoming an entrepreneur: Before the start of the programme 57% of the students had thought about becoming an entrepreneur, after the programme 93% thought about becoming an entrepreneur (Figure 4). As Schwarz summarizes, "Explanations of these persons include other plans for their professional career (4 persons) or the lack of financial means (1 person). The former, however, do not exclude intrapreneurial activities and could, therefore, lead to individual application and drive for progress within an enterprise." (Schwarz 2012, p. 37)

The development of the participants of COEUR is fostered in their own judgement by the components of the process listed in figure 5, where practice-oriented learning is ranked highest. "Through this active self-learning process in team work, students are able to develop individually, according to their potentials, to assess themselves, and to take responsibility for their own decisions. In addition, a multitude of the COEUR coaches build their input sessions on personal real-life practice and, thus, deliver authentic training for the mostly inexperienced students. The breaking down of borders between the university and "the world outside"

beyond the horizon by including outside experts, distinguishes the COEUR project from many other conventional courses.” (Schwarz 2012, p. 42)

The following four top-ranks can all be linked to the idea, that creativity in business today is increasingly collaborative and cumulative (Leadbeater 2005). Diversity is seen as a driver in the creative development process of entrepreneurial ideas and the diverse European cultures thus can be understood not as an obstacle (which diversity might be in the realisation-phase), but as an asset for Europe, which should be further developed and harvested for European enterprises, in particular their vast majority of 99,8 % of the grand total number of them: SMEs (Stawińska 2011, p. 11).

Figure 5. Components of the Programme to Enhance COEUR Competences



Source: [Schwarz, 2012, p. 41]

The benefits for enterprises which COEUR participants can offer, thus include the opportunities of getting fresh ideas for the future and to get access to creative problem solving capacities. They may get in contact with students with an entrepreneurial mindset at an early stage and use international recruiting opportunities to find support in the ‘War for Talents’, in particular for SMEs.

COEUR is constantly trying to improve its grounding and performance. A second phase of the career-tracking is in preparation and will run in 2012 to focus the impact of COEUR experiences in the actual working situation of the participants and their enterprises. The COEUR partners will put their effort on improvements of the processes and the future extension of the network in Europe. An increasing number of participating universities in the existing networks and an increasing number of networks are the core strategic goals for the next years. The 10th COEUR Workshop will take place in Wroclaw from 16th-21st September 2012 and offer the opportunity for any potential partner to gather a life first-hand impression.

Beside the existing offers, COEUR has already developed further ideas and products to support the networking of and with former participants. To leverage the opportunities of COEUR to the full potential, the COEUR partners are seeking cooperation with enterprises to support the idea and contribute to the spread of the COEUR network throughout Europe.

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