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# **Finnish Young People's Attitudes towards and Perceptions of Entrepreneurship**

- An evaluation of the impact of Youth entrepreneurship theme year

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## **Abstract**

*In the Helsinki-Uusimaa region of Finland, 2012 was the theme year of entrepreneurship, with the central aim of promoting entrepreneurship among young people. Throughout the year about 80 different events took place. The present study analysed the impact of the theme year and its activities. The study will examine the changes in the attitudes and perceptions towards entrepreneurship amongst young people. The first sample (N = 873) was collected in early 2012 and the second sample (N=725) in early 2013. The results indicate the challenging nature of trying to influence attitudes towards entrepreneurship and perceptions of entrepreneurship. According to the results the perception of entrepreneurship changed slightly during the theme year, but only amongst upper secondary school students. Similarly a small change was observed in the relationship between the perception and appreciation of entrepreneurship. In addition the study shows how challenging it is to evaluate the impact of promotional activity at the regional level.*

**Keywords:** entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship attitude, entrepreneurship education, perception of entrepreneurship

## **1. Introduction**

In Finland and also elsewhere in Europe, the importance of entrepreneurship has been highlighted in many recent resolutions (e.g. Small Business Act, 2008; Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan, 2012). Also the promotion of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education has a significant role in society. Since the early 1980s there has been considerable research activity in the field of entrepreneurship education (Kuratko, 2005). Furthermore there is need for reliable research data on the influence of entrepreneurship education and various different types of activity promoting entrepreneurship.

This study focuses on the promotion of entrepreneurship in the Helsinki-Uusimaa region in Finland. In particular it is examined the *Youth entrepreneurship* theme year held in Helsinki-Uusimaa in 2012. The Committee of the Regions of the European Union named Uusimaa as one of the European Entrepreneurial Regions (EER) for 2012 which was the starting point for the theme year. To answer and meet to these objectives “*Promoting Young Entrepreneurship in Helsinki-Uusimaa Region - EER 2012*” project was created.

We analyse the impact of theme year’s activities from the perspective of attitudes and perceptions. In particular we will ask: How have young people’s attitudes towards entrepreneurship and perceptions of entrepreneurship changed during the EER 2012 theme year? As material we use two survey data which were collected from the secondary schools around Helsinki-Uusimaa region (N1=873 and N2=725).

Entrepreneurship attitudes and perceptions have been studied extensively. According to several studies, the attitude approach has been proven viable especially for explaining entrepreneurial intentions and behaviour (e.g., Liñán, 2008; Liñán and Chen, 2009; Goethner *et al.*, 2012; Moriano *et al.*, 2012; Walker *et al.*, 2013; Rantanen *et al.*, 2015). Likewise it has also been used in the evaluation of entrepreneurship education programmes (e.g. Fayolle & Gailly, 2004; Fayolle *et al.*, 2006; Weaver *et al.*, 2012; Moreno & Wach, 2014). On the contrary the attitude approach has been applied less to evaluation of regional entrepreneurship projects and regional development activities.

In this article we first describe Helsinki-Uusimaa as a region and context for business activities and analyse Finnish social perceptions of entrepreneurship based on previous studies. Second, we describe the *Youth entrepreneurship* theme year, its objectives and activities. Then we evaluate the impact of activities on young people’s attitudes and perceptions using the survey data. Finally, we consider issues relating to the promotion of regional entrepreneurship and its effectiveness in general.

## **2. Helsinki-Uusimaa as a region and a context for business activities**

The Helsinki-Uusimaa region is situated in northern Europe on the south coast of Finland. It consists of 26 municipalities and has around 1.6 million inhabitants, which is more than a quarter of the country’s total population (Central Statistical Office of Finland). It is a leading region in Finland from the perspective of business, innovation, development and concentration of knowledge.

Uusimaa's economic structure is dominated by services. According to the 2012 Entrepreneurship Review (Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2012, p. 152), Uusimaa accounts for 48.4% of the whole country's revenue.

In 2012 the development of GDP was negative in Finland (Central Statistical Office of Finland). Even though Finland's economic status was strong compared to many other Euro States it was also one of the most vulnerable states due to a strong dependence on exporting (Ministry of Finance, 2012, p.12). The amount of new enterprises decreased and closures increased in Helsinki region in 2012 (Helsingin seudun yritysraportti, 2013, p. 91; Central Statistical Office of Finland).

The Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Programme in 2011 included a vision and strategy for promoting entrepreneurship amongst young people and finding new ways to influence the entrepreneurial spirit. The new Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Programme (2014) emphasizes that the Helsinki-Uusimaa region needs renewal, new young entrepreneurs, immigrants as potential new entrepreneurs, more start-ups and companies driven towards export. The structural change in the global economy reflects strongly on the Helsinki-Uusimaa region which means that the businesses are also undergoing a continuous structural change. According to the programme it is crucial to nurture and activate a flourishing entrepreneurial culture and an atmosphere amongst young people, but also in society, that is conducive to entrepreneurship.

### **3. Attitudes and perceptions of entrepreneurship in Finland and in Finnish entrepreneurship discourse**

The concept of attitude is multi-dimensional and can be defined in different ways (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). It can be understood as a property or trait of the individual as well as a constructive concept (DeRosa, 1993). Typically attitude is understood as a value judgment of a given target (Eagly & Chaiken 1993). Attitude theory has traditionally made a distinction between the target and the topic of attitude. A certain topic, for instance entrepreneurship, may be subject to different interpretations in a young person's mind and thus their interpretations or perceptions of the topic also have an influence on their valuations. Therefore young people's attitudes towards entrepreneurship are closely linked with their perceptions of entrepreneurship. Some studies have also examined attitudes towards entrepreneurship as a part of an analysis of entrepreneurship perceptions (e.g. Davey et al, 2011).

In terms of attitudes and perceptions of entrepreneurship Finnish thinking includes some unique characteristics. First of all, the valuation of entrepreneurship is at a very high level in Finland and there is a high degree of consensus on the importance of the enterprises, promotion of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) the status accorded to successful entrepreneurs was seen as the highest in European Union (Amorós & Bosma, 2014, p. 27).

On the other hand Finnish entrepreneurship discourse has also presented a critical point of view. Nevanperä (2003, 143-144) has made a distinction between two kinds of criticism, enterprise criticality (critical attitude towards the social importance of SMEs) and the understanding that entrepreneurs are selfish. Also the new Finnish entrepreneurship education studies show that it is justified to examine both the positive and the critical attitude towards entrepreneurship. The recent critical discussion of entrepreneurship is associated particularly with criticism of neo-liberalism and consumption-centred thinking (Räty, Komulainen & Korhonen, 2010).

Finnish studies have highlighted different kinds of personal features of entrepreneurs, such as innovation, creativity, and self-confidence. In particular several Finnish studies have brought to the fore an image of the entrepreneur as a 'persevering, hard worker'. This kind of perception emphasizes the diligence of entrepreneurs and a plentiful amount of work. This means that entrepreneurs like working hard (Home, 2007, p. 428), they have to work extended hours and cannot afford to take vacations (Hyytiäinen & Pajarinen, 2005, pp. 156-157).

Also the significance of social skills and networking has been recently emphasized in Finnish entrepreneurship discussion (e.g. Äyväri, 2006). For example, Kivelä's (2002, s. 81) study showed that *diligence* and *perseverance* are the adjectives that reflect best the entrepreneur respondents' opinion in Finland, but on the other hand, 91% percent agree with view that "*get along with other people*" describes very well or fairly well the typical entrepreneur. Mention is also made of the relationistic image of entrepreneurship (Vesala, 1996; Vesala & Peura, 2007; Tonttila, 2010) which highlights networking, close client relationships and interest in group cooperation. The relationistic image of entrepreneurship is a combination of internal and external control (cf. Rotter, 1966; Wong & Sproule, 1984): an entrepreneur expects his success to depend both on himself and others.

In a number of previous entrepreneurial attitude and intention studies, the importance of social relationships has been examined using the concept of social capital (Liñán & Santos, 2007;

Chuluunbaatar et al., 2011; Goethner et al., 2012). However this study focuses on young people's perceptions instead of their own social networks. The effectiveness of the theme year will be examined particularly from the perspective of the relationistic entrepreneurship image, as well as positive and critical entrepreneurship attitudes.

#### **4. The “Young Entrepreneurship” theme year in Helsinki-Uusimaa**

The main focus of the Helsinki-Uusimaa theme year was the promotion of young entrepreneurship. The aim was to boost interest in entrepreneurship, promote entrepreneurial activity, creativity and spirit, develop business know-how and create new networks and raise awareness of business and innovation activity in Uusimaa. (EER Project Plan 2011-2013.) The aim of the theme year was to impact on young people's attitudes towards entrepreneurship and to change their perceptions concerning entrepreneurial activities. During the theme year the goal was to create an enthusiastic atmosphere and present entrepreneurship as a creative activity and an opportunity.

The idea of creativity as a starting point for regional development and entrepreneurship is not unique. Florida's (2003) concept of *creative class* refers to diversity and creativity as basic drivers of innovation and regional and national growth. This means that communities are undergoing more sweeping transformation, social capital has emerged in cities and communities and furthermore these innovative and creative firms are seen as sources of regional and national growth. Caloniuss (2004, pp. 23-24) argues that a policy of technology and design is crucial to the growth of creative society, even though heated discussions between these sectors occur. Himanen (2004; 2012) highlights creative economy where the Finnish welfare state is combined with competitiveness. The structures of the economy and an unprejudiced attitude need re-evaluating in searching for new solutions.

The EER-project contained a large number of participative entrepreneurship theme year events, creative programmes and inter-network cooperation. During the theme year almost 80 events were organized in the Helsinki-Uusimaa region. The range was from functions and conferences with several hundred participants to smaller networking events. The events were aimed at different target groups, such as political decision-makers, business people, students and organizers of entrepreneurship education. The events fostered closer cooperation, inspired dialogue and boosted the internationalization between the education and business sectors, students and entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs and students met at various entrepreneurship events, seminars at large expo-style events.

The main target groups of the theme year were young people of secondary-level and university students, as well as young entrepreneurs from the creative field. Over the year these events were organized in a number of schools in Uusimaa area. The events tried to engender optimistic attitudes towards entrepreneurship and created an inspiring and positive atmosphere. Their core message was that entrepreneurship is a career option and it can also be a path to success. The starting point for the events was about building stronger self-awareness as well as increasing entrepreneurial activity and spirit. The events encouraged students to work hard in pursuing their dreams in the future.

Support also came in the form of complementary interactive online services (Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, blogs, Flickr) and participants took part in group work on entrepreneurship topics. The event provided online teaching materials, which included entrepreneurs' backgrounds and experiences of entrepreneurship and concrete tools for innovation, creating a business plan and establishing a business.

## **5. Research design, questions and hypotheses**

In some previous studies the attitude approach has been used in the evaluation of entrepreneurship education programmes. For example Weaver et al. (2012) have shown that a five-week intensive entrepreneurship programme can have an influence on entrepreneurial attitude. In turn the impact study of a three-day entrepreneurship programme by Fayolle et al. (2006) showed no effect on attitudes. The focus of this study relates to the effectiveness of a regional development project, not a single entrepreneurship education programme. The study examines the changes at regional level rather than individual-level changes. It asked: How have attitudes towards entrepreneurship and the perceptions of entrepreneurship of students in secondary school changed during the EER theme year? This question is formulated with the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The entrepreneurship attitudes of students are more positive at the end of the EER theme year than they were previously.

Hypothesis 2: The critical entrepreneurship attitude among students is less at the end of the EER theme year than they were previously.

Hypothesis 3: Students' perception of entrepreneurship changes during the EER theme year.

Hypothesis 4: The relationships between students' attitudes and their perceptions of entrepreneurship change during the EER theme year.

Contrary to the principles of experimental and quasi-experimental impact study, this study has not

used a control group. The reason for this relates to the regional development perspective. It is very difficult to find a region that would be comparable with the Helsinki-Uusimaa region in cultural, demographic and economic terms. Another difference is that the changes are examined at the level of the whole population, not at the level of the individual participants. Thus the respondents of the two surveys are not the same. Comparability of surveys is based on the fact that both surveys are representative samples from the same population.

According to a realistic evaluation by (Pawson & Tilley, 1997) examination of the impacts is not enough but it is necessary to also analyse the mechanisms affecting the study and the impact of context where activities take place. At the beginning of this article the context and activities of the project were described. However the survey data does not permit a systematic analysis of the impact of these.

## **6. Sample and methods**

Over the course of the research process two sets of survey data were collected in six upper secondary schools and six vocational schools across a total of eight municipalities around the region of Uusimaa. Expectations were set in such a way that they would apply to the whole region. From the vocational schools cultural, economics, social and healthcare, technology and transport departments participated. The respondents were second-year students (mainly 17-18-year-olds). Data was collected by means of an electronic survey during class time. Due to practical reasons the survey was completed on paper in one school in 2012 and in two schools in 2013. The first set of survey data (N = 873) was collected in the period January-March 2012 and the second set of data (N = 725) was collected in the period January-March 2013.

Overall the representativeness of the both surveys was good from the perspective of a residential area, school (upper secondary school and vocational school) and field of study and mother tongue (the proportion of Swedish-speaking). The response rate was 71.0% (upper secondary schools 79.1%; vocational schools 63.7%) in the first survey and 46.0% (upper secondary schools 54.6%; vocational schools 37.3%) in the second survey. The poorer response rate in vocational schools was influenced by absences and student work placements. The lower response rate to the second survey amongst high schools was due to the fact that, for practical reasons, not all student groups were able to complete it, particularly in large upper secondary schools.

The first survey comprised 72 questions and the second survey 89 questions. The majority of them took the form of Likert-scale indications (1 = completely disagree, ..., 5 = completely agree). When compiling the questionnaire previous, mainly Finnish, research studies were used as reference points (e.g., Vesala, 1996; Nevanperä, 2003; Hyytinen & Pajarinen, 2005; Flash Eurobarometer 283, 2009), but the previous criteria were not used. Before the survey was adopted it was tested on 19 university-level students.

Analysis of the data was mostly carried out using simple statistical methods. The sum variables were set using factor analysis (generalized least squares and varimax with Kaiser normalization). The normality of distributions was checked using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and histograms. The differences between mean values were examined using the t-test. Relationships between sum variables (hypothesis 4) were examined using Pearson's correlation coefficient and the difference between correlation coefficients was analysed using Fisher's Z-test.

According to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test distributions for all variables were not completely normal. However, because the distributions were nonetheless close to normal and the size of the data set was sufficient, the use of parametric methods is justified. Some general methodological issues related to the use of Likert-type scales. It is clear that the Likert scale is, in the statistical mind, only ordinal. However a number of researchers (e.g., Norman, 2010) have suggested that parametric methods can be utilized in the case of Likert scales as well.

The comparative analysis was first done using all the material. Changes in attitudes and perceptions were also examined separately amongst upper secondary school and vocational school students. At this point one school unit was removed from the first material in order to achieve better comparability. The reason for this was that this unit was not included in the second sample.

## 7. Measures

Sum variables were formed based on the first survey using factor analysis. The three factor model explains 43.2% of the total variation of the variables (cf. Table 1).

**Table 1:** Factor analysis. The four greatest loading items for each factor in the first survey.

	factor 1 20.4 %	factor 2 12.2 %	factor 3 10.7 %
Entrepreneurs are ideal citizens	.	.434	.
Succeeding as an entrepreneur requires perseverance	.636	.	.
An entrepreneur must get along with different kinds of people	.670	.	.
Many entrepreneurs are money-grabbing speculators	.	.	.632
Entrepreneurs are typically hard-working and responsible	.	.395	.
Succeeding as an entrepreneur requires stress tolerance	.710	.	.
An entrepreneur must be able to convince others	.647	.	.
Succeeding as an entrepreneur requires selfishness	.	.	.453
Entrepreneurs' work is valuable for the entire society	.	.758	.
An entrepreneurs' work is hard and laborious	.	.	.
Succeeding as an entrepreneur depends not only on oneself but also on other people	.	.	.
Entrepreneurs unscrupulously take advantage of other people	.	.	.845
Entrepreneurs play a key role in the success of the society	.	.676	.
An entrepreneur must often work extremely long hours and cannot take vacations	.	.	.
Small enterprises are a burden to society	.	.	.404

First, the *perception of entrepreneurship* sum variable was formed from the four questions that loaded most highly on factor 1. It characteristically emphasizes perseverance and stress tolerance as well as interest group cooperation. Second, the (positive) *entrepreneurship attitude* variable was formed from the four questions that loaded most highly on factor 2. The questions concerned an entrepreneur's ethics of hard work, responsibility and exemplarity. On the other hand, the questions deal with the societal significance of an entrepreneur's work. The *critical attitude* variable was constructed on the basis of the questions that concerned the selfishness and unscrupulousness of entrepreneurs. Additionally, one question which relates to the social importance of entrepreneurship was included in the variable.

The reliabilities of the sum variables (cf. Table 2) were quite good (above 0.7) except the critical attitude. Its reliability is 0.65 in both samples. The reason for this may be that the various aspects of a critical attitude differ from each other: It is one thing to call into question the social importance of businesses and another thing to criticize the entrepreneur's personality (Nevanperä, 2003).

**Table 2:** Sum variables and their reliabilities (Cronbach’s alpha).

Sum variable	Questions	2012		2013	
		N	Alpha	N	Alpha
Entrepreneurship attitude	4	872	0.740	722	0.705
Critical attitude	4	872	0.652	722	0.649
Perception of entrepreneurship	4	872	0.788	722	0.821

## 8. Results

At first we will look at the changes in young people's attitudes towards entrepreneurship and perceptions during the theme year in the complete data. Table 3 shows that there were no significant changes in attitudes. Overall Finnish young people have a quite positive attitude towards entrepreneurship. For example, 37.7% of respondents agreed with the statement “*entrepreneurs are ideal citizens,*” (second sample) and 12.2% disagreed (second sample). On the other hand, critical attitudes can be seen. The criticism is specifically targeted at entrepreneurs’ selfishness not so much at the social importance of entrepreneurship. After the theme year (second sample) 43.8% of the respondents agree with the statement “*Succeeding as an entrepreneur requires selfishness*” and only 4.9 % agree with the statement “*Small enterprises are a burden to the society*”.

**Table 3:** Changes in attitudes and perceptions of entrepreneurship during the theme year in the complete data

Sum variable	2012			2013			t	p
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD		
Entrepreneurship attitude	872	3.60	0.65	722	3.61	0.63	0.31	.756
Critical attitude	872	2.76	0.71	722	2.77	0.70	0.28	.778
Perception of entrepreneurship	872	4.35	0.62	722	4.26	0.67	2.76	<b>.006</b>

Young people’s perceptions of entrepreneurship changed significantly during the EER theme year. At the beginning of the EER theme year young people supported unanimously the opinion that the entrepreneur must be persistent and get along with other people. Only a low percentage (4.0% and 2.5%) of respondents disagreed with this. Also, after the theme year, the results were similar but not as clear. The proportion of respondents who agree with statements decreased and the opinions of entrepreneurship became more varied during the EER year. This is credible, because the subject of entrepreneurship was presented in a number of ways (cf. Table 4).

**Table 4.** Questions concerning the perception of entrepreneurship.

Question	Sample (year)	N	agree (in %)	disagree (in %)	mean	SD	t	p
Succeeding as an entrepreneur requires perseverance	2012	872	88.2%	4.0%	4.33	0.83	2.12	<b>.034</b>
	2013	721	83.4%	3.5%	4.24	0,85		
An entrepreneur must get along with different kinds of people	2012	871	92.2%	2.5%	4.50	0.76	2.04	<b>.042</b>
	2013	721	88.9%	2.8%	4.42	0,80		
Succeeding as an entrepreneur requires stress tolerance	2012	872	87.0%	2.9%	4.29	0,80	1.68	.094
	2013	720	81.8%	3.1%	4,22	0,85		
An entrepreneur must be able to convince others	2012	872	85.8%	2.5%	4.25	0.79	1.98	<b>.048</b>
	2013	722	81.6%	2.6 %	4.17	0.81		

How the relationships between the attitudes and perceptions changed during the EER theme year is examined next. First, we can note that the correlation between entrepreneurship attitude and critical attitude is negative and significant, as would be expected. However it is quite low which supports the assumption that the positive attitude and the critical attitude should be considered separately.

The correlation between entrepreneurship attitude and perception of entrepreneurship is very high. (0.524 in the first data and 0.596 in second data). The appreciation of entrepreneurship is linked strongly to the idea that the entrepreneur must be persistent and get along with different kinds of people. This way of thinking seems to be dominant amongst Finnish young people and the connection between entrepreneurship attitude and the relationistic perception of entrepreneurship even strengthened during the theme year (cf. Table 5).

**Table 5:** Changes in correlation coefficients (Pearson) during the theme year in the complete data .

Sum variables	2012 (N=873)			2013 (N=725)			F	p
	N	r	p	N	r	p		
Entrepreneurship attitude - Critical attitude	872	-.178	.000	722	-.235	.000	1.18	.238
Entrepreneurship attitude - Perception of entrepreneurship	872	.524	.000	722	.596	.000	2.08	<b>.038</b>
Critical attitude - Perception of entrepreneurship	872	-.055	.107	722	-.119	.001	1.28	.201

Finally, students in upper secondary schools and vocational schools are considered separately (cf. Table 6). The only significant difference is in the perception of entrepreneurship amongst upper secondary school students. It seems that the entrepreneurship promotion in theme year succeeded better in upper secondary schools than in vocational schools.

**Table 6:** Changes in attitudes and perceptions during the theme year in upper secondary schools and vocational schools.

Sum variable	2012			2013			t	p
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD		
<b>Upper secondary schools</b>								
Entrepreneurship attitude	463	3.70	0.61	428	3.66	0.63	0.91	.363
Critical attitude	463	2.72	0.73	428	2.73	0.68	0.15	.881
Perception of entrepreneurship	463	4.39	0.54	428	4.27	0.65	2.93	<b>.003</b>
<b>Vocational schools</b>								
Entrepreneurship attitude	391	3.49	0.68	289	3.53	0.64	0.84	.404
Critical attitude	391	2.80	0.68	289	2.84	0.72	0.69	.488
Perception of entrepreneurship	391	4.29	0.70	289	4.24	0.70	0.93	.352

For many vocational school students being self-employed is a realistic option in the near future. In contrast, for upper secondary schools students the labor market and their own career choices are more distant things and the issues of entrepreneurship are more abstract for them. Thus it is to be expected that upper secondary school students' perceptions change more easily.

## 9. Conclusions

The results show that young people's attitudes towards entrepreneurship did not change during the EER theme year. Consistent with the Finnish sample of GEM study (Amorós & Bosma 2014, p. 27), attitudes strongly focused on the positive side. However a critical entrepreneurship attitude is also present amongst Finnish young people, as we assumed (cf. Rätty et al, 2010). On the other hand there is no reason to be afraid of critical attitudes. A certain amount of criticism may even arouse public debate about entrepreneurship and thus create a realistic view of it.

There was quite a large consensus about the perception of entrepreneurship amongst Finnish young people. The traditional perception of entrepreneurship was combined with the highlighting of social skills. Consistent with previous studies (e.g. Kivelä, 2002; Nevanperä, 2003; Hyytiäinen & Pajarinen, 2005; Home, 2007), Finnish young people agree that entrepreneurship requires perseverance and hard work. This view of point is clearly distinct from the message of the EER project which emphasized the enthusiasm and spirit.

The results show that entrepreneurship perception changed slightly during the EER theme year. On the basis of the results it cannot be concluded whether the change was due to the project or some external factors in society or in the economy. First, the observed changes could be explained by the economic recession in 2012: The weak economic situation reduces the belief that one can succeed as an entrepreneur by means of social skills and perseverance and this is also reflected in the social perceptions of entrepreneurship. Second, it is possible that the traditional view, which emphasizes the importance of persistent and diligent working, is gradually being replaced by newer social ideas of entrepreneurship. On the other hand, this does not explain changes in the importance of the entrepreneur's social skills. In any case, the results show that it is difficult to have an influence on entrepreneurship attitudes and perceptions at the regional level.

In recent years there have been a great number of different entrepreneurship projects and campaigns in Europe, and a number of projects are directed just at young people. There has been a certain kind of “project optimism” in Europe. However according to the results of this study there is no basis for such optimism. Construction of an entrepreneurial culture is a long-term process. It is not possible to create a new culture by using single events or projects. It requires long-term activities and structures, which include entrepreneurial education and business incubation activity, as well as a number of concrete enterprise policy measures, for example, support services for start-up businesses and potential growth companies.

Some limitations are acknowledged in relation to the results of this study. First of all, perceptions that were analysed are based on a previous Finnish study. Because of this newer priorities were not included in the research design. Second, the study looks at only one Finnish project. Comparative studies have shown that there are significant national differences in entrepreneurship perception (e.g. Davey et al., 2011). So the results cannot be generalized.

Third, some of the challenges associated were in the design and methodology. The reliability of critical attitude was quite low and the response rate of the second sample low. The evaluation of the regional development project also included some fundamental methodological challenges: When changes at the regional level are looked at it is not possible to find a control group which would be similar in terms of relevant demographic, economic, political, etc. background variables. In addition the study does not systematically analyse the mechanisms affecting the context or the importance of same. On the other hand these kinds of fundamental methodological challenges related to all regional development projects.

One main aim of the EER theme year was to change the culture and create entrepreneurial enthusiasm and spirit. But how can we conceptualize the entrepreneurial enthusiasm and spirit? They are obviously a multidimensional phenomena, which combines cognitive, affective, functional and social elements. This study focuses on the attitudes towards entrepreneurship and perceptions of entrepreneurship, even if the attitudes and perceptions are just one aspect of the change in culture.

Entrepreneurship attitudes have been studied widely in the 2000s. However attitude approach is also associated with many limitations. People's attitudes do not directly predict the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and by examining attitudes we cannot predict who will be setting up a business and not. If we are interested in the growth of companies and their sources we should take into account the very large number of economic, social and cultural factors which have an effect on this. We need diverse impact studies which focus not only on the attitudes and perceptions, but also start-up companies, conditions of business and long-term cultural and economic changes. In any case the promotion of entrepreneurship as well as a critical assessment of it is needed in the future.

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