



INTEGRATING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND WORK EXPERIENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

National Report Cyprus



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SOLUTIONS LTD 8th Feb 2018

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of WEXHE is to support the development of work-based learning (WBL) in European higher education institutions (HEIs). This should enhance the value of higher education; as it helps to:

- bridge the gap between practical and theoretical learning,
- align the skills set of graduates and the skills they require in their early careers
- support the transition of graduates into employment and career success.

The project was divided in 3 phases:

- Investigation
- Development
- dissemination.

Currently, the project is finishing its investigation phase (Work-Package 3). For this work package, enterprises, associations and HEIs came together to identify the current provision of WBL in 7 different EU countries.

As output of the investigation phase, WEXHE delivered 84 cases of good practice (12 per country), covering 4 disciplinary areas (hard-pure; soft-pure; hard-applied and soft-applied) and 3 modes of delivery (internships, traineeships and entrepreneurship). Additionally, each partner wrote a literature review summarizing the status of WBL in its respective country.

Given the background, the purpose of this National Report (Cyprus) is threefold:

- I. Describe the methodology used to write the Cyprus literature review and the steps used to identify, select and write the 12 cases of good WBL practice.
- II. Detail the challenges faced, the gaps found, and lessons learned in this first phase of the research for Cyprus
- III. Briefly describe the results obtained, encompassing: a) a summary of the status of WBL in Cyprus and b) the main findings of the 12 Cypriot case studies.

As such, this document is also divided into three sections. Section 2 will detail the methodologies used, section 3 the challenges faced, gaps found and lessons learned and section 4 the results of WP3 for Cyprus.

In addition, the reader can find in the appendix: a) the full literature review on the status of WBL in Cyprus; b) a 'one-page summary' of all the cases used as pre-selection for the final 12 Cypriot cases studies; c) the complete reports of the 12 cases of good WBL practice in Cyprus.

2. METHODOLOGY

As mentioned in the introduction, this section will describe the methods used to write the literature review and the steps used to identify, select and write our 12 case of good WBL practice.

2.1 Literature Review

Two main sources of data were used to write the Cypriot literature review: a) written documents and b) primary data obtained from WBL experts.

The richest source of documental information came from reports from official institutions such as the Cedefop¹ and the European Commission, as well as from Cypriot websites such as Ministry of Labour, Human resources authority (hrdauth.org.cy), Liaison offices website <http://www.liasonoffices.ac.cy/> and also Department of statistics (mof.gov.cy)

More information was acquired during the interviews with the experts that gave us either information not published in websites or as seen from a different perspective.

2.2 Case Studies

Locating cases

According to the WEXHE guidelines, cases should be located through a broad consultation with WBL experts from the different disciplinary areas covered by the project.

Since Cyprus is very small and because a body (www.liasonoffices.ac.cy) was created for this reason along with other CAREERS offices of the Universities) it was not difficult to find people that could give us the required information or inform us about experts in certain fields

IT was difficult however to find good cases since the WBL is not very advanced in Cyprus and moreover it is really difficult to almost impossible to find cases and experts for soft-pure and hard-pure disciplinary areas. Efforts were made to identify cases by searching from the Industry point of view or from the academic point of you and by also talking to academic and market experts.

1. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/statistics-and-indicators/statistics-and-graphs/esjsurvey-insights-no-9>

We would generally say that

- Liaison offices and Careers offices were generally very willing to give us all required information
- It was difficult / almost impossible to get through the bureaucracy of PUBLIC universities in order to give us the AUTHORITY to ask and therefore give us the requested information –
- For example
 - o we contacted a public university liaison office
 - o they accepted to help and arranged a meeting 2 months later
 - o After the meeting they informed us that they were not authorised to disclose any information and that we had to talk with the dean of academic affairs
 - o The dean for academic affairs managed to see us 3 months later and also asked if they were going to get money for helping in this project
 - o Apparently (depending on the Officers or other people related) some universities were more willing to help as compared to others
 - o Some universities (and especially PUBLIC) made it really difficult for us to collaborate for this project and at the same time requested money – Bureaucracy really kills things moving forward!
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- We have seen that The headmasters or people who were responsible for Students placements (i.e. at department level) DID not have any connection with the industry and EVERYTHING WAS HANDLED BY THE CAREERS or LIAISON OFFICES
- This was quite a surprise and even if some COURSE have placements/internships or training ships MOST of them were not really connecting the ACADEMIA with the INDUSTRY in a meaning full way.
- We would generally say that there is a great need (departmental level) for collaboration between the academia and the industry in order to have something fruitful.
- There were some surprises however (i.e. Journalism at Frederick University) in which there was a very close collaboration

Table 1: main sources used to identify cases according to mode of delivery and disciplinary area

	Soft-Pure	Soft-Applied	Hard-Applied	Hard-Pure
Internships	Everybody	Academic	ACADEMIC/INDUSTRY	Everybody
Training ships	Everybody	Academic	ACADEMIC/INDUSTRY	Everybody
Entrepreneurship	ACADEMIC	ACADEMIC	ACADEMIC	ACADEMIC

Selecting the Cases

WEXHE guidelines recommended that 2 cases should be located for every disciplinary area, totaling 24 cases per country (4 disciplinary areas x 3 modes of delivery x 2 cases per area). From these 24 cases, 12 should be selected for detailed investigation. Ideally,

one should use: i) generic competence development, ii) professional relevancy and iii) transferability as criteria for selecting the better of the 2 cases in each disciplinary area.

These were the guidelines however it appeared to be that PURE (Soft or hard) disciplinary areas were not very easy to identify cases or cases did not exist at all

Entrepreneurship however could be mostly found in Applied areas (hard or soft applied) and we would consider it as interdisciplinary since there was not deviation for each of the areas or something special within the courses

After talking to some experts and because we have been very closely working with the universities we identified more than 50 possible cases from all universities. These cases however they included disciplinary areas that were not under investigation or had WBL learning activities imposed by law (such a nursing /teaching/architecture etc)

After further filtering we identified more than 30 possible case studies and we contacted

- Liason offices of the Universities (we worked very closely with in the past)
- Experts from The industry
- Academic Experts that we were aware that they know the scene in Cyprus and they can further identify or redirect us to other experts.
- Our aim was to understand and “feel” what is the correct approach and therefore we approached the Universities u

	Soft-Pure	Soft-Applied	Hard-Applied	Hard-Pure
Internships	2	5	2	0
Training ships	0	0	1	0
Entrepreneurship	TOTAL – 2 CASES for ALL AREAS			

Table 2: number of final cases per disciplinary area and mode of delivery

Writing the Cases

The following procedure was followed for writing the cases

- Contacting EXPERTS and organisations that will be able to identify the possible case studies
- After identification of possible case studies, the basic case information is gathered by the University website or Company website
- The information found is analysed and put on the Case template
- Universities and Companies are contacted requesting more information regarding the missing details or other details related with the case
- Completing the case and follow up with the parties if required

As mentioned previously it was not very difficult to contact the universities (we only have 5 private and 2 public) universities in Cyprus – However it was very difficult to identify cases since most of the officers approach (from the Liaison offices or Career offices) was “Yes we have placements, internships please let us know for which you need more information so we can help you” It was not CLEAR (even for them) if COURSE included these placements as part of their degree, or if ECTS was in place for these cases. We had to contact the departments directly therefore it was a lengthy process

All material was then collected, analysed and efforts were made to put it in a meaningful order.

3. CHALLENGES, GAPS AND LESSONS LEARNED

During the whole process we have faced and learned the following

- There is lag of coordination within the universities regarding STUDENT PLACEMENTS
- Information is scattered and most times the Department does not know where the student was placed because it is the responsibility of the liaison or career office
- The Liaison / Career office does is not aware of the status of the placement (if it is required by the COURSE/ if it gets and CREDITS etc.)
- Most departments did NOT work CLOSELY with the INDUSTRY – These were handled by Liaison offices and this is causing problems for any future collaboration
- Therefore, a better coordination WITHIN universities is required for successful placements

In addition

- Some universities were more willing to help and some others asked if they were going to act as partners in the project or they even asked for money (since someone was going to spend a couple of minutes with us!) – This was more obvious (i.e. bureaucracy) with the PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES and lengthy processes
- There is a great distance between the INDUSTRY and the CARRER offices and even greater distance with the DEPARTMENTS
- There is no tracking of placements (at least most universities) and if it exists it is not easy to trace / analyse
- We had faced some issues regarding getting more information from The industry and the students. Sometimes they were not giving us information because they were not authorised and they considered some information as NOT DISCLOSED

3.1 Literature Review

As mentioned before Universities of Cyprus are relatively new and also industry is not very strong. The strongest “industries” in Cyprus are TOURISM, Business services and the Construction industry. Many students graduate from many courses and ultimately they will not be really being able to work in the field they have studied. Most of them are underemployed or employed in a field that is completely different from their studies.

Because of this large industry- academia gap the government is helping for graduates to train and ultimately get a job by services from HRDAUTH (human resources authority) or VET education organised by KEPA (Cyprus productivity centre)

Moreover, the Liaison offices at the universities were funded by the government in efforts to bring academia and industry closer – This project (funds etc.) ended in 2015.

Regarding VET education – mainly at technical level, we can see that there have been considerable efforts throughout the last decades to train inexperienced technicians and manual workers. Up until now

- Blue collar workers were considered that needed Training/Internships
- White collars (i.e. university graduates) were considered that there was no need for vocational training
- The whole system was designed for Blue collar workers to have training and almost all literature is for VET training, vocational training etc.

3.2 Case Studies

A number of challenges were faced and lessons learned during the process of location, selection and creation of the 12 case studies. To better structure this narrative, this section is divided into: i) locating cases and ii) selecting and writing cases.

Locating cases

The main challenge we found in locating cases was access to WBL experts, especially in the pure (soft/hard) disciplinary areas. On the other hand, applied (soft/pure) were easier to find

Pure disciplinary (employment opportunities) are not really available from the industry. ON the other hand, the industry focuses on APPLIED areas – those that can “sell” and can produce a real product or service.

Pure disciplinary areas can only be found in Universities/ research institutions or some R&D departments of large organisations/industries

For these reasons and because of lack of research outside universities in Cyprus it was almost impossible to identify cases in PURE disciplinary areas, whereas it was somehow easier to identify in the APPLIED disciplinary areas.

As mentioned before Entrepreneurship was VERTICAL – Multidisciplinary with main focus to APPLIED. ICT technologies were the main driver for entrepreneurship in Cyprus. ICT can be used as an umbrella and can cover/combined other disciplines from BOTH PURE and APPLIED.

The trend for entrepreneurship is to combine ICT with traditional sciences either applied or pure and it can be even combined with other disciplines (social sciences etc)

Selecting and Writing Cases

As mentioned before we tried to gather as much information as we could without involving the experts or the persons that were responsible for the cases.

We tried to put as many pieces of the puzzle together after we first contacted them because we got the impression that they WOULD NOT commit to do anything – especially the public universities – they even requested money for their time spend – they even requested to be considered as partners in the project (somehow!)

It took more than 3 months from the initial acceptance of the contact persons / the mini interview → Prepare the semi structure survey as much as we could → then ask the EXPERTS about the missing parts

I am not sure if we could ever get a commitment – maybe in a future project we allocate some money for each case that will be selected as “good practice” – The lack of incentives for them to help + tight agendas of all persons involved meant that we had to get a lot of RAW material, analyse it and then get back to the experts for verification/details etc.

One of the things that was not very clear (even if we tried our best) was “what are we going to win if we help you?” “we are going to spend so much time – what for?” and also some more arrogant responses such as “we know what needs to be done for WBL in our university – we don’t really need to get involved in this” - As mentioned before – some universities were very eager to help and some others not. But most of them were willing to help, get involved in the project, and also really interested about the future results of the project

4. SUMMARY OF RESULTS

In this section we summarize the WBL status in Cyprus and the general picture we have in Cyprus. The Cases for Cyprus have been obtained from both the academia site and also the Industry.

We have to mention however that WBL in Cyprus is not very much supported by Academia and therefore the connection between ACADEMIA-Industry is quite weak. For details on design, delivery, management, etc. of the cases; please refer to the Annexes of this document.

4.1 The Status of WBL in Cyprus

Cyprus universities are relatively new and therefore inexperienced in the correct way to promote the collaboration between industry and academia. As mentioned the connection between ACADEMIA is quite weak and because of this the government supports many other initiatives for graduates in order to fulfil this gap

There have been efforts to bridge this gap and try to bring academics and businesses closer together the project “Industry Liaison Offices” with funding of €3.1 m EU Structural Funds was run during 2009 – 2014 consistent with the Europe 2020 strategy: “Innovation Union

Some of the aims of the project were the following:

- Collaboration of Private and Public Sector within a mutual objectives scheme
- Development and Promotion of Innovation Culture (entrepreneurship)
- Maximizing opportunities and employment potential of students/graduates through a students’ placement framework

Project results were presented in July 2015 and among the conclusions were the following:

ACADEMIA: There was no real incentive for academics to collaborate, research was mainly theoretical, lack of regulations regarding IP rights, bureaucracy involved for collaborating with their own established contacts.

BUSINESS: There was no visible gain from the collaboration with the universities and due to the economic crisis at the time this was not a priority

STUDENTS: No real incentive to participate in Internships / placements since most courses don’t require this to graduate, minimal number of students willing to go for unpaid placement, and minimal number of Businesses were willing to spend time and money due to the economic crisis.

This experience shows that there is an immediate need for a better design of the process followed for these placements/internships, a change in the state of mind of both businesses/academia and students and a compulsory incorporation of internships in the programs of study.

4.2 Trends Revealed by the Case Studies

This weak bond / connection between ACADEMIA / INDUSTRY reflects also in the case studies that we have identified from Cyprus. Only a handful of case studies (from our point of view) we would consider them as really successful and had real value for all parties concerned i.e (Academia (Professors), students (future employee), Industry (either collaborating with Academia or hosting students for Internships/placements)

WBL was generally and WRONGLY considered and perceived as not ESSENTIAL for University graduates and was considered essential for other types of workers (manual workers such as plumbers, carpenters, steel workers etc). This wrong perception has been gradually changing since the Industry is demanding GRADUATES that have specific experience and knowledge.

PLACEMENTS/INTERNSHIPS

- Summer Placements - Most Universities DONT offer a Placement (i.e. structured with specific scopes) summer placement scheme. In addition, this is based on a volunteer basis. (i.e. Some companies offer Summer placement to students and students apply for placement) - Some companies pay students for the summer placement and some other don't pay them.

We have also identified that

- Students that are placed during summer holidays and work in LARGE companies, they don't really gain any significant experience (to have a more broaden view of their topic) but they only concentrate in doing typical repeatable work without real value. Most of the time these large companies are able to pay the students
 - Students that are placed in smaller companies gain more experience and they learn more things as compared to larger companies. Depending on the company activities they are able to understand how things work and have a better knowledge of the structure of the company along with other responsibilities
- Most degrees DONT offer Internships for 1-2nd year students. Instead they offer them to 3rd and final year (4th) students and the duration falls between 6 weeks to 6 months. These mainly fall in Business and Engineering areas and also ICT. Most university courses that offer INTERNSHIPS offer it because it is MANDATORY by law (i.e. Nursing, Law, Architecture etc.). For courses that are not mandatory by law the approach for a specific topic / degree vary from university to university
 - During our research we found that

- **COURSES with a very clear Internship plan** some courses offer by private universities engage their students in an approach that helps both the Academia/the industry and also the student. For example, some courses that offer Journalism they have a very clear outline of what is expected from the Student, they have mentoring (from the Industry site) and they also work in real projects. All of this is done with a very close collaboration between the Professors (academia) and the Industry.
- **Courses without a Clear Internship PLAN:** MOST of the courses DONT have a very clear outcome of these internships and albeir they include it in their courses the Connection (and collaboration) between Academia and the Industry is very weak (most engineering courses fall in this category)
- **Courses** for engineering included internships but the TIME of the internship is very short (max 2 months) - This is not really beneficial for either the student or the hosting company

TRAININGSHIPS

As mentioned previously Cyprus universities are relatively new and most students were studying (before 1990s) in universities in Greece or the UK. These popular destinations (for students from Cyprus) had their own Internships/placements but most of the times did not offer anything for students from abroad. For this reason the government created the Human Resources Authority (<http://www.hrdauth.org.cy/>) for VOCATIONAL TRAINING (for graduates)

The Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA) is a public-law body that started its work in 1979. On 1 November 1999, Human Development Law 125 (I) of 1999 entered into force. The HRDA 's mission is to create the conditions for planned and systematic training and development of the human resources of Cyprus at all levels and in all areas to meet the needs of the economy within the framework of the social and economic policy of the state.

In order to fulfil the mission and exercise the responsibilities and powers of the HRDA, the Human Resources Development Fund operates. Each employer is required to pay to the Fund a fee not exceeding one percent of the payable earnings to each of its employees, as determined each time. This obligation excludes the Government in its capacity as an employer.

Typical plans offered by HRDAUTH include subsidized placement (for 6 months - 1 year) of graduates with experience less than 6 months. However, these apply for graduates who are less than 30 years old. HRDAUTH also offers subsidy for private training course (i.e to attain professional certificates in ICT sector)

In addition, the Cyprus Productivity Centre (under Ministry of Labour) offers other vocational Training courses and therefore there is an overlap of these services

INTERNSHIPS AND TRAINING SHIPS are also affected by

Soft Applied

Soft applied studies (such as business and management) are very popular in Cyprus. However, we see that Only certain topics have specific requirements (i.e. collaboration between Universities for INTERNSHIPS or TRAINING ships for Large Auditing companies (Accountants/business have clear targets whereas management studies don't have clear targets and of course successful WBL)

Soft Pure (history, cultural etc)

It's not easy to find anything related to this area in Cyprus

Hard Applied (such as Engineering)

Even Though there are many companies offering placements (during summer) or Traineeships (supported by HRDAUTH) we would generally say that most Students don't have the chance to apply their knowledge since the Engineering industry in Cyprus is not of a high level.

Some Universities offer positions and collaborate with large organizations (such as CYPRUS CEMENT) and really apply their knowledge but there are not a lot of companies that can offer quality placements at high level

Hard Pure

Again it's not easy to find quality cases from Cyprus

Our conclusion is that Internships and Training in Cyprus are more targeted for APPLIED (either soft or hard) studies and less for PURE (soft, hard) . This is also caused by the local situation in which most companies (industry) DONT offer anything that fall in the PURE area of interest

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is now quite popular in Cyprus and Most Universities have engaged mechanism to support it in the last 3-4 years. The first STARTUP related events were supported (and hosted at Universities) during 2012 because of the economic crisis more and more UNEMPLOYED students/graduates thought that it was a good idea to create a startup company. Most universities DONT include any entrepreneurship courses but they have created special supporting offices that

- Organize competitions
- Organize lectures and seminars with speakers from both the academia and the industry and they share their experiences
- They offer these to BOTH students of the University but also to the public (and graduates)

We have to note that these competitions don't differentiate between SOFT/HARD/APPLIED/PURE but they are too general instead. However, we would say that the area that drives more attention is the area of ICT and especially Internet Apps or other ICT related content and Soft pure is the least. Most of these events are supported by various

stakeholders and we have seen some startup idea winners to continue and create companies. However

- The money put in this (winners only won a couple of thousand euros)
- Most of these ideas were not connected to the REAL industry - did not drive attention from the industry for further funding

In any case we feel that the STARTUP scene in Cyprus (including entrepreneurship) is quite new and we would consider it as a Bubble. Many Students believed that because they have an idea, they can conquer the world. Reality is that most of these startups failed and failed dramatically (i.e they spend 100s of thousands of Venture capital and ultimately they closed Down. We would consider the whole entrepreneurship scene in Cyprus as immature/inexperienced and still need a lot of things to learn.

As there was a trend for new companies/startups and in an effort for the government to support entrepreneurship The Ministry of Commerce announced 3 years ago its call for startups. This seemed like a good idea - however Bureaucracy of the government (more than 2 years to decide which proposals to fund) did not help the whole process.

Another problem that arises within Universities (and more specifically PUBLIC universities) is that

- There are no incentives for Professors to collaborate with the industry
- Professors are ranked according to the number of citations they have in Journals and NOT because of their academic performance or collaboration with the industry

The government is trying to change this by changing legislation giving the right to the professors to get involved in a STARTUP and sell the IP (intellectual property) of a new invention etc. They are also trying to promote legislation that allows the usage of these IP rights in NEW spinoff companies that they will be created from students (in collaboration with their professors)

Therefore, one of the barriers for connecting ACADEMIA /INDUSTRY is

- Lag of legislation of IP rights
- Lag of any incentives for academia to collaborate with Industry
 - Collaboration can be achieved at many levels
 - Student placements
 - Internships
 - Joint projects (i.e the industry supports/funds the academia to find solutions)
 - Not clear of the IP rights and responsibilities
 - Not clear about the ownership of spinoffs (is it the University or the Professor)