

## **"Entrepreneurial training in the 21<sup>st</sup> century"**

### **About us**

Syntra Flanders, officially named Vlaams Agentschap voor Ondernemersvorming – Syntra Vlaanderen, is an executive agency of the Flemish Government. Its mission is the promotion and organization of high-quality, innovative and labour market-oriented competency development of scholars and adults, in function of more and stronger entrepreneurship in the Belgian region of Flanders. We do so by means of the organization, subsidization, direction and supervision of the apprenticeship system and entrepreneurship courses in Flanders. To do so, the agency cooperates intensively with independent, regional training institutions, the so called Syntra, to set up courses.

### **About the project**

In Belgium, the admission to entrepreneurship, a self-employed status or the management of a company with less than 50 employees has long been limited to people with a higher education degree, a secondary education degree in economics and business management, successful apprentices, or the holders of a certificate in business management which can be obtained at a Syntra training centre or a centre for adult education. In addition, a certificate for some 'protected' professions such as hairdresser, butcher or plumber was also required in order to be able to set up a business. Such a certificate can be obtained after successfully concluding a course at a Syntra training centre. Professional and business management courses are only accessible for adults.

The Flemish Government recently decided to cut the requirement of possessing a professional certificate (except for professions related to construction) or a certificate in business management. These decisions were based on a number of reasons: compatibility with EU legislation, the fact that these courses became an obstacle rather than a motor of entrepreneurship, new concepts such as the sharing economy, e-commerce and pop-ups, and the focus on starting an enterprise while neglecting other phases such as business expansion or threatening bankruptcy.

Despite the forthcoming deregulation, the need for courses still remains amongst entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs. Reports show that half of the Flemish entrepreneurs don't follow at least 1 training a year, although a similar amount indicates to experience a professional or management competency gap. Such reports indicate an underperformance of entrepreneurial trainings, but also an inadequate reaching of the target group and its guidance towards trainings.

The Belgian economy is characterized by a steady growth of the number of enterprises, as well as a low and stable number of discontinuations and bankruptcies. This may seem to be positive, but in fact these numbers imply a very low turbulence figure – one of the lowest amongst OECD countries. Thus, the Belgian economy has a very low level of creative destruction, in which older, inadequate companies are competed out of the market by younger, more competitive and productive companies. Such a low level indicates a severe lack of innovation amongst enterprises. One of the more effective ways to counter this trend is by means of innovation-oriented entrepreneurial courses.

In a nutshell, this project aims for a thorough renewal of the complete system of entrepreneurial training in Flanders, also including the non-subsidized courses offered on the free market. The focus is on 4 aspects: the reaching of the target group and guidance towards trainings, the renewal of the formal side (digitalization, flexibilization, customization, and new pedagogic methods and tools), the renewal content-wise (innovation-oriented and focus on all phases of an enterprise's life cycle), and the government's involvement in the different aspects of entrepreneurial training. Horizontal targets are inclusion and gender mainstreaming, cocreation, and the set-up of an enduring transnational network which acts as a knowledge hub, promotes transnational mobility of entrepreneurs, and raises awareness of the EU internal market.