

Chapter 20

Junior Achievement Europe: An education network, multiple countries

Junior Achievement Europe (JA Europe) designs and implements educational programmes that aim to foster an entrepreneurial mindset and skills among students. This chapter describes the objectives, rationale and activities of JA Europe. It presents the challenges faced in implementing its programmes and the impact achieved to date. Finally, it highlights the lessons learnt and the conditions for transferring this practice to another context.

Summary

Junior Achievement Europe (JA Europe) is a pan-European network of 40 national Junior Achievement¹ (JA) organisations that aim to teach young people as early as possible about the world of enterprise and entrepreneurship, to inspire and prepare them to succeed in the global economy. JA Europe is the largest non-profit organisation (NGO) in Europe bringing together the public and private sectors to participate in entrepreneurship education.

JA Europe supports each national network and represents its members in dealing with EU institutions and collaborating with them on policy issues, content development and stakeholder outreach. Each national JA organisation is responsible for initiating programmes and activities in schools at the national level. The methodology is “learning-by-doing”: the goal is to foster innovative thinking and improve young people’s work and life skills through experience and practical activities. Students work closely with volunteers from the business or public sector, who act as mentors alongside the teachers. In 2014/15, JA organisations reached 3.5 million students in Europe, supported by 117 000 teachers and 164 000 business volunteers.

Social entrepreneurship is an important and growing sector of the economy. JA Europe's activities reflect this development, with the social dimension gaining traction in many JA programmes. In the lower grades, these programmes focus on opportunities for students to engage in the local community. In secondary or higher education, students widen their circle of engagement to encompass international actions, through initiatives such as Social Innovation Relay (SIR) or Social Enterprise 360 (SE360). SER is a sophisticated ideation exercise designed to stimulate creativity through an international online innovation camp supported by business mentors; it is linked to SE360, a strategic partnership between organisations from eight countries² that builds on the SER idea by taking students into a real start-up focusing on social entrepreneurship.

By combining social ideation and business development, students gain skills and knowledge in identifying social business ideas and turning them into real businesses. Several studies conclude that students who have had this kind of entrepreneurial learning establish more companies later in life (Elert, Andersson and Wennberg, 2015; JA Worldwide, 2014).

Key facts

JA started working in Europe more than 50 years ago, initially in the United Kingdom and later in Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Sweden. Its European members have produced important impact research on the programme's effectiveness, going as far back as 30 years. JA Europe was established in 2001 as the European regional operating centre for JA Worldwide. In 2015, its total annual budget amounted to approximately EUR 8 million: 82% from private funding, 14% from public funding and 4.5% from other revenue sources. Its social entrepreneurship activities, initiated mainly over the past decade, cover two main categories:

Core activities and programmes in most European member organisations have been adapted to promote and support social entrepreneurship, and are generally integrated in the curricula in close co-operation with education authorities: some extra-curricular or after-school activities are also offered by businesses or organisations. An estimated 500 000 students across Europe participate in these activities every year (JA Europe, 2015, 2014). Financing is approximately 50% private and 50% public, provided by multiple sources such as the European Union, national governments, local authorities, private businesses and foundations. Local community and businesses are always involved as volunteers, judges or mentors.

European initiatives are developed in partnership with national organisations, businesses and schools, and disseminated through the European and global JA networks. Since 2010, 216 000 students have participated in these activities. A combination of private and EU funding (50/50) has supported the development of the programme, including teacher training and establishing web platforms; local school authorities have normally supported implementation in the classrooms. Among JA Europe's activities, 95% are organised by national education system staff; the remaining 5% are organised by JA staff or its partners.

Based on an entrepreneurship education template, JA Europe educates European trainers, who in turn train national teachers or trainers.

Objectives

JA aims to inspire and prepare young people to succeed in a global economy by fostering entrepreneurial mindsets. JA Europe's educational programmes centre on three pillars:

Entrepreneurship involves turning ideas into action, creativity, innovation, risk-taking, planning, and developing perseverance and self-confidence.

Work readiness is bridging school, community, personal life and work. Entrepreneurship education focuses on bridging the gap and establishing a connection between school and the world of work, by developing work habits and conducts, personal leadership, communication skills, teamwork and collaboration, customer-service skills, and learning about the rights and responsibilities of workers and employers.

Financial literacy is the ability to understand how money works, and how to earn and manage money, as well as acquire a set of skills and knowledge that allow individuals to make informed and effective decisions concerning their financial resources.

Social entrepreneurship appeals to young people who like the idea of applying business skills and ingenuity to solving social problems. Over the years, JA activities have increasingly reflected the growing importance of social entrepreneurship, as defined by the European Union (2010).³

JA Europe has developed a progression model showing a young person's entrepreneurial learning journey; new experiences compound previous learning and challenge them to reach the next stage of development.

Rationale

Now more than ever, Europe needs entrepreneurial attitudes. Youth unemployment rates have skyrocketed: in February 2015, 85 million young people were unemployed in the European Union (Eurostat, 2016). In most EU Member States, rates for youth unemployment and young people "not in education, employment or training" are significantly higher for first and second-generation migrants than for their native peers. In a society where employment provides entry to networks, social life and recognition, young people are among the most vulnerable in an economic crisis. A 2015 European Parliament report (European Parliament, 2015a) states that "entrepreneurship, and in particular social entrepreneurship, are important drivers of social cohesion and sustainability that can boost the economy while simultaneously alleviating deprivation, social exclusion and other societal problems." Communities' welfare depends on young people's employability and social involvement.

While the primary objective of an education system is to prepare youth to contribute to society and the economy, school systems are struggling to adapt to rapidly evolving demands in terms of job skills and crisis conditions have increased the pressure. Among other objectives, schools need to prepare students to integrate the labour market through entrepreneurship or by creating opportunities of their own, while preparing them to solve social issues, and participate proactively and innovatively in social value and job creation.

Uptake of entrepreneurship education is still limited in most European countries, and start-up rates remain low (European Commission, 2016). Research has shown that investing in entrepreneurship education at school results in higher levels of entrepreneurship activities later in life,⁴ and is more cost-effective than later-stage efforts. JA Europe wants to make a difference at these earlier stages, by helping young social entrepreneurs improve

and ensure their enterprise development, offering tried-and-tested content and tools, providing teacher training and setting up business-school partnerships for long-term co-operation.

Entrepreneurship (including social entrepreneurship) education needs to factor in experiential learning. While teachers do not necessarily provide students with the answers, they help them research and identify the right questions, and find the best answers. Developing the competences of school leaders and teaching staff – including aspiring new teachers and those who have been in the profession for a long time – has been both a challenge and a priority for JA Europe. JA organisations provide high-quality, “hands-on” training programmes for teachers.

Activities

The “backbone” of all JA activities is shared content. JA Europe develops programmes and activities in close co-operation with its national member organisations, which adapt the content to the specific national curricula and conditions. In this manner, JA can move ahead on particular priorities or large-scale projects, as well as measure impact and share research among countries.

JA programmes focus on developing competences such as teamwork, problem solving, leadership, initiative and creativity. They build skills in turning ideas into action, analysing information, managing projects or business ventures, budgeting, financial management, marketing and sales. Students also use their digital knowledge and foreign-language skills when carrying out these activities.

- At the primary-school level, activities are diverse, action-based and child-centred. With the support of volunteers from the community, pupils learn to take initiatives, solve small problems as a team, and use their creativity, and social and collaborative skills. They also receive their first training in social responsibility.
- Middle-school students learn techniques to generate social ideas, solve social problems in creative ways, and face the consequences of their choices.
- Upper-secondary students and students in vocational training learn how to set up a mini company. This learner-driven activity, which summarises all the elements acquired so far in the progression, is one the most effective practical entrepreneurial experiences available to them. Working in teams, students produce social ideas, identify ways forward and turn concepts into action. National and international competitions challenge them to do their best and validate what they have learned.
- Students at the higher-education level are challenged to create business concepts that are not only viable but also sustainable, and aim to solve entrenched social problems such as poverty, environmental degradation, lack of access to healthcare and inadequate education. Students sign up for competitions and pitch their ideas to representatives from the social business sector.

JA activities include:

- “Our Community”: a programme for primary schools adapted for use in communities with high migrant populations, to help improve understanding of the local social system, social networks, and the roles of the public and private sector
- “It’s My Business”: a programme offering lower-secondary students the opportunity to observe and devise solutions to social problems in the local community

- “Innovation camp”: a structured activity to generate social business ideas for upper-secondary or vocational-training students
- “The Company Programme” and “Social Enterprise 360”: year-long activities where students create traditional mini-companies or social enterprises, and participate in various competitions organised by JA at the national, European and global levels
- The “Start-up programme”: a mini-company activity for higher-education students with social business ideas.

Activities specifically designed to foster social entrepreneurship include:

- 2010-present: Social Innovation Relay (SIR)

SIR builds secondary school students’ social business acumen and team-working skills to help them produce strategies and concepts addressing a social need or challenge. Using a dedicated “match-making” platform, JA Europe pairs teacher-led student teams from several countries with corporate volunteers from NN Group (its key partner for this programme), who mentor and help them translate their concepts into viable business concepts.

Technology also plays an important role in connecting students from diverse backgrounds with role models, as inspiring social entrepreneurs join the classroom through webinars and answer questions about their entrepreneurial journey.

The mentorship programme has had a positive impact on participants, motivating them to launch real social enterprises in the future. An evaluation performed by Warwick University’s Centre for Education and Industry in 2013 (Warwick University, 2014) revealed that 78% of participating students were more confident in their ability to start a social enterprise; 86% were more aware of the social issues in their own community; 84% were more aware that social and business objectives could be complementary; and at least 90% improved their communication, motivation and critical thinking.

Since 2010, 25 countries have participated in SIR, involving 134 000 students.⁵ Each country paired the top 20 teams with business volunteers from around the world.

- 2011-15: Social Enterprise Programme (SEP)

The objective of SEP was to increase the pool of potential social entrepreneurs, by providing social enterprise education to young people across Europe aged 15-18. The 26-week Programme brought together the worlds of education, training, skills, work and the community closer together, to inspire and recognise young social entrepreneurs.

Student teams participating in the Programme spent between two and four hours every week in the classroom or performing an after-school activity. Led by a SEP guide and mentored throughout the year by a volunteer business advisor at regular mini-company meetings, the student teams created their social enterprise and submitted their business plans online. They also made a four-minute video presentation and uploaded it onto *YouTube*. A national panel of judges from the private sector selected a winner to create awareness about social entrepreneurship. At the European level, the national winners submitted a business plan, a four-minute video presentation in English, and an advertisement promoting their social enterprise to an online panel of international judges, who selected the European winner.

SEP was the result of a partnership between JA Europe, ArcelorMittal, FERD and Intel; 14 200 students participated in the Programme between 2011 and 2015. The Programme was formally closed in 2015, but its main content has spilled over into SE360.

- 2015-present: Social Enterprise 360 (SE360)

SE360 was developed and implemented with support from the European Commission and is financed through ERASMUS+. In many ways, it is an upgraded version of SEP, featuring more technology and flexibility.

The programme aims to teach 15-19 year-old students about social businesses and social entrepreneurship. It features two versions: the shorter version guides students through the process of producing a social business idea; those wishing to go further can join the extended version, moving on to set up and operate their own social business (mini-company) during the school year.

SE360 offers students the opportunity to interact with real-life social entrepreneurs during the online social café. Students learn about – and are inspired by – their path to success and receive valuable feedback on their own social enterprises. Over 300 students participated in the online social cafés in 2015/16; SE360 reached 6 188 students in 2015/16.

Challenges encountered and impact

Challenges

Private-public partnerships providing interaction between schools and the business community may be instrumental in closing the gap between a traditional academic curriculum and the skill set necessary to launch a successful start-up. However, interacting with several partners with different purposes also creates challenges.

Scaling up the initiative and attracting more volunteer advisors to maximise its reach can best be addressed by raising awareness of these various programmes' positive impact on young people's entrepreneurial potential, as well as their relatively low implementation costs.

Implementing social entrepreneurship education should be part and parcel of a school's plans, and communicated to teachers, students, parents and the local community. Even though the SIR, SEP and SE360 programmes do not entail reforming the educational system, or require additional government spending, they are proven tools to spur social innovation and equip young people with the skills needed to make a difference in their communities.

Teachers are the main drivers, but also the main hindrance to implementing entrepreneurship education in European schools. They need training to understand the benefits of social entrepreneurship education and embrace their new role as facilitators breeding students with entrepreneurial mind-sets, supported by the head teacher, who represents the school leadership. Recognising particularly active teachers and creating awareness about their practices is thus very important (European Commission, 2011). More research on the changing role of teachers, their views on pedagogical methods and their recommendations for implementing entrepreneurship education should also be conducted.

Finally, **evaluation and assessment** should be performed to measure progress in several areas connected not only to student performance and outcomes, but also teacher practices.

Table 20.1. features an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOTs) facing JA Europe.

Table 20.1. **SWOT analysis of JA Europe**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Based on public-private partnerships ● Easy to replicate from country to country ● Low implementation cost ● Well-established national organisations in 40 countries ● Programmes available in many languages ● Proven tools and methods ● Strong positive focus on entrepreneurship education from politicians and the European Union¹ ● Possibility of going global, as JA is a worldwide organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dependent on fundraising and financial support ● Needs manpower to initiate and follow up on initiatives at the national level ● Despite entrepreneurship education being a political priority in some countries, few schools have implemented the programme so far ● Social entrepreneurship is new to most teachers; initiatives are dependent on teachers' motivation and willingness ● Not enough focus on teachers' continuous professional development ● Need more research on impact ● Need evaluation and assessment tools
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Local involvement through volunteers to inspire young students ● Programmes do not require any educational reforms ● Activities are easy to scale through existing web platforms ● Many partners willing and eager to give recognition and create awareness ● JA social entrepreneurship programmes can easily be integrated in the school curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Co-operation among several partners with conflicting purposes ● Schools, particularly at the secondary level, work within a specific curriculum and timetable. This may delay integrating and implementing entrepreneurship education programmes in their schedule. ● Lack of support from school leadership ● Inadequate allocation of time and resources for teacher training ● Gap between political ambitions and absorption in the bureaucracy and school system ● Initial teacher-training institutions slow to pick up new pedagogical and political initiatives ● Traditional examination systems do not validate social-entrepreneurship initiatives in schools

1. The Baltic states, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Nordic countries, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania. More recently, France, Italy, and Greece.

Impact

Most of the JA initiatives detailed above build on the “mini-company” model, where groups of students form their own enterprise. They gain insight into how they can use their talents to set up a business, and discover first-hand how a company functions. They elect a board of directors from among their peers, raise share capital, and market and finance a product or service of their choice. At the programme’s end, they present a report and various accounts to their shareholders.

Bringing volunteers from the corporate world into the classroom to share their experience gives students a better overview of career opportunities and the skills needed to succeed. Business mentors add valuable insight and real-life experience, which complements theoretical content and helps make the students’ temporary social enterprises more sustainable. Students begin to consider entrepreneurship as a possible career, whose success is predicated on the “connection with businesses ... flexibility and adaptability to different types of education ... enthusiasm and motivation generated ... and creativity, initiative and innovation it unlocks in young people” (European Commission, 2005).

Lessons learnt and conditions for potential replicability

Lessons learnt

Studies in different countries repeatedly show how much more entrepreneurial potential can be tapped through educating, training and empowering students while they are still in school.⁶ These comparative findings provide strong support for the notion that the JA concept – which allows students to “experience” social entrepreneurship by setting up, organising, running

and finally dismantling a social enterprise – is an effective educational tool that improves both the quantity and quality of social entrepreneurship. It is interesting to both educators and policy makers, since public education and entrepreneurship education yield societal returns through solving social problems, firm and job creation, salary growth and tax payments.

Conditions for potential replicability

The Nordic countries have the highest penetration of entrepreneurship education in the school system. A report for Nordic Innovation (Chiu, 2012) provides insight into the main success factors for potential replication:

- key role of JA organisations
- cross ministerial co-operation
- full autonomy of educational institutions, as long as they comply with National Qualification Framework or steering documents
- intensive business engagement
- entrepreneurship education embedded at all levels and types of education
- teachers' role as facilitators.

Embed entrepreneurial learning in all sectors of education: very few European countries have well-developed strategies to embed entrepreneurship (including social entrepreneurship) in the education system, and many schools offer no entrepreneurship programmes at all. Through its *Rethinking Education* communication (European Commission, 2012) and “Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan”, the European Commission has asked Member States to provide all young people with “practical entrepreneurial experience before leaving compulsory education” (European Commission, 2013). The European Parliament backs the Commission’s initiatives (European Parliament, 2015b).

Establish a shared platform: most JA programmes and initiatives are digital, offered on a shared platform and hence easy to replicate. The SE360 initiative is an example of how 15 countries successfully share a common internet technology platform in 15 languages.

Produce an implementation manual: national JA organisations adapt the activities to local conditions, thanks to teachers and education experts who review and test the content in a few schools before designing the implementation manuals and disseminating the programme across the country. Manuals show teachers how to integrate the content in different subjects and use them according to the national curriculum, thereby facilitating its rollout within the country and internationally.

Notes

1. “JA Worldwide is one of the largest global NGOs dedicated to addressing fundamental social and economic challenges of young people by educating and empowering them to transform their future and own their economic success. [...] With more than 100 member countries, the JA Worldwide network is powered by over 450,000 volunteers and mentors from all sectors of society, reaching more than 10 million young people around the world every year.” For more information, see: <https://www.jaworldwide.org/aboutja/>.
2. Belgium, Malta, Serbia, Romania, Italy, Croatia, Denmark, Greece and Spain.
3. A social business/social enterprise is an undertaking whose primary objective is to achieve social impact rather than generating profit for owners and shareholders; which uses its surpluses mainly to achieve these social goals; and which is managed by social entrepreneurs in an accountable, transparent and innovative way, in particular by involving workers, customers and stakeholders affected by its business activity (European Commission, 2010).

4. Read more at: <http://jacharters.org/jaimpact>.
5. The programme currently runs in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Japan, the Netherlands, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia and Spain.
6. Several studies have investigated the start-up frequency after participation in mini-companies. A Boston Consulting Group report (2011) estimated the payback as 1:45 ratio, based on studies on social enterprise in Canada. A Young Enterprise report (2012) showed that 42% of the alumni surveyed started firms, compared to 26% in the control group of non-alumni. Studies from Norway and Sweden confirm these findings: Johansen (2010) looked into 1 000 former mini-company participants aged 20 to 30 years in 6 European countries, and found more entrepreneurs among them than in the national population. The study points out that mini-companies increase the likelihood of starting a company before turning 25 years old and before completing a university degree. Elert, Andersson and Wennberg (2015) compare JA-YE Sweden's register of mini-company alumni with Statistics Sweden and finds that former mini-company participants are more likely to engage in entrepreneurship than the control group. Using data from a Norwegian test-control group study with 1 200 respondents, Johansen (2011) finds a positive correlation between participation in mini-companies and start-up activity.

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