

Press Release I

## **Poland needs new entrepreneurs to overcome growth bottlenecks**

There is a great shortage of entrepreneurs and senior managers in all Baltic Sea Region countries, that leads to serious growth bottlenecks in the SME sector and an innovation rate that is much lower than it could and should be. Due to demographic reasons this shortage will increase in the future. Poland's young labor force will decrease by about 25% by 2030. In view of this sharp decline on the one hand and the high number of ageing business owners on the other, it is becoming increasingly difficult to meet the high demand for successor entrepreneurs. Already today, more workplaces are lost due to failed age-related business takeovers, than are created by business start-ups.

There is at least the same need for senior managers who, in addition to professional and technical qualifications, also have leadership and management skills. A sound and high-level entrepreneur training can secure company successors, business founders and senior managers. Furthermore, it sustainably increases the performance and competitiveness of SMEs while at the same time promotes the realization of dual vocational training and dual Bachelor degree programs.

The Hanse-Parlament – an association of 50 economic chambers from 13 north-east European countries, and the Baltic Sea Academy – a coalition of 18 universities from 9 Baltic Sea Region countries – are currently implementing EU-funded projects to realize an ambitious entrepreneur training as well as secure business takeovers and start-ups with partners from all over the Baltic Sea Region. The Wielkopolska Craft Chamber in Poznan and the Poznan University of Life Sciences are both partner in these projects.

The Wielkopolska Craft Chamber in Poznan, together with the Hanse-Parlament, hosts a conference in which foreign experts from Baltic Sea Region countries participate to weigh in their experiences and suggestions. The agenda topics include the presentation of new training opportunities for entrepreneurs, models to secure business transfers to the next generation and support measures for small and medium-sized enterprises. Concrete solutions and successful pilot projects are presented during the conference. Moreover, entrepreneurs will outline their current situation and needs.

The conference “Securing young entrepreneurs in SMEs through innovative educational pathways” is open to the public and takes place on 25 October 2019. All guests are welcome. The participation in the conference including business lunch is free of charge.

Press Release II

## **Small and medium-sized enterprises ensure prosperity and growth for all**

There is a great shortage of entrepreneurs and senior managers in all Baltic Sea Region countries, that leads to serious growth bottlenecks in the SME sector and an innovation rate that is much lower than it could and should be. Due to demographic reasons this shortage will only increase in the future. Poland's young labor force will decrease by about 25% by 2030. In view of this sharp decline on the one hand and the high number of ageing business owners on the other, it is becoming increasingly difficult to meet the high demand for successor entrepreneurs. Already today, more workplaces are lost due to failed age-related business takeovers than are created by business start-ups.

### **Overcoming blatant growth bottlenecks with the training of entrepreneurs and senior managers for the medium-sized economy**

To tackle these challenges, the Wielkopolska Craft Chamber in Poznan, together with the Hanse-Parlament, hosted a conference in Poznan on 25 October 2019. Poland entrepreneurs and experts as well as foreign experts from other Baltic Sea Region countries have participated in the conference. In summary, the conference produced the following results:

1. Results, Best Practice models and concrete support measures were presented and discussed. 6 Partners from Finland, Germany, Lithuania and Poland have developed and tested them within the three-year EU-funded project "Designing and implementing a dual Bachelor's degree study course with integral attainment of a Bachelor's and Master's degree".
2. A new entrepreneur training and experiences in different countries was also presented at the conference. The sound and high-level master craftsman training with an integrated Bachelor degree program can secure company successors, business founders and senior managers. Furthermore, it sustainably increases the performance and competitiveness of SMEs.
3. Within the scope of the project, concepts and curricula for two different entrepreneurs trainings in the Baltic Sea Region countries were developed, tested, evaluated and implemented.
4. To improve the current situation the project developed two different dual bachelor's study courses that combine two degrees: the academic bachelor's and the Master craftsman qualification, and thus the project goals are to:
  - increase relevance and quality as well as improving competencies and knowledge in the parts of the master craftsman training program and in the parts of the Bachelor's degree;
  - transfer relevant professional skills and practical experience through the dual study approach;
  - contribute to the overcoming of shortage of entrepreneurs in SMEs;
  - ensure Bologna-compliant study courses with full international recognition;
  - contribute to the EU agenda for the modernization of Europe's higher education systems;

- increase the attractiveness of vocational education and training;
  - promote permeability by reducing recognition problems.
5. Small and medium-sized enterprises have very limited opportunities to recruit new generation of managers from amongst the graduates of higher education institutions and universities, as these young academics have only theoretical training and therefore lack the necessary professional skills and practical experience. In contrast, the new trainings as a Bachelor and a master craftsman at the same time is geared to the specific needs of small and medium-sized enterprises and opens up excellent career opportunities for graduates.
6. In order to promote competitiveness and innovation, the currently far too low level of cooperation between SMEs and universities must be emphatically strengthened. This is achieved in an excellent way by the two new entrepreneurial training courses, as universities and SMEs are training partners in the framework of dual qualifications. Within the framework of the dual Bachelor study programs, in SMEs innovations are promoted, technology transfers are secured and company-specific R&D work are carried out.

Poland's considerable opportunities can only be released through the highest level of innovations and outstanding qualifications. Politics, business and society in Poland must recognize the invaluable importance of small and medium-sized enterprises, vocational training and entrepreneur qualification, discuss the outstanding value of education policy and acknowledge that investing in human capital pays off in the safest and best way. In connection with this, top priority must be given to supporting and securing the high and increasing number of business transfers.