



## YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP THEME YEAR, FINLAND

### What?

In 2012, the Helsinki-Uusimaa region organised the Youth Entrepreneurship Theme Year, a year-long project to promote entrepreneurship among youth. The Helsinki-Uusimaa region was one of three designated as a European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) for 2012 and the theme year was organised in this context. Started in 2011, the EER award, a label launched by the European Committee of the Regions, provides financial support to approximately three European Union (EU) regions that demonstrate an innovative entrepreneurial policy strategy every year. The European Commission runs the EER project with the support of other EU stakeholders, including Eurochambres.

### Why?

One of the main motivations for this initiative was a simultaneous decrease in the number of new businesses started in the region and an increase in the number of business closures. The theme year aimed to change youth's perception of entrepreneurship and create an environment where entrepreneurship was perceived as an opportunity. More specifically, the objectives were to:

- Boost interest in entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial activity and creativity;
- Develop business know-how; and
- Raise awareness of business and innovation activity in the region and create new networks.

### Key activities

About 80 events were organised as part of the Theme Year, ranging from large conferences to small networking events. The events mainly targeted secondary school youth, university students and young entrepreneurs from creative fields, but some also engaged policy makers and the business community. Most activities endeavoured to inspire youth and teach them about the potential of a career in entrepreneurship. In addition to in-person events, the theme year included a series of online initiatives rolled out through various social media platforms. The project also offered online learning resources, including example stories and support documents on key steps of business creation (e.g. developing a business plan, registering a firm).

## Impact

An evaluation assessed the impact of the 2012 theme year of entrepreneurship in Helsinki-Uusimaa using two surveys of 1 598 second-year students (17-18 years old) enrolled in 6 upper secondary schools and 6 vocational schools in the region. The evaluation found that young people's perceptions of entrepreneurship became slightly more positive following the theme year. However, it was difficult to fully attribute this change to actions undertaken as part of the theme year as other factors could have been at play, e.g. difficult labour market conditions.

*This case study was adapted from material published in: OECD/European Union (2019), "Policy brief on Recent Developments in Youth Entrepreneurship".*

**Source URL:** <https://betterentrepreneurship.eu/en/content/youth-entrepreneurship-theme-year-finland>