

Junior Enterprises: Preparing and Supporting Entrepreneurs

The Junior Enterprise concept and organisational structure

A **Junior Enterprise** (JE) is a non-profit organisation formed and managed exclusively by university students. Junior Enterprises operate at the local level and are associated with a university. Students in JEs provide services for businesses, institutions and individuals. They are knowledge labs within academic institutions where the latest theoretical research is applied in a business context. Junior Enterprises encourage their students to go further with a driven attitude and to think of them as future shapers and active citizens. At the moment, 413 JEs are active in Europe in 16 countries.

On a higher level, JEs are organised in **confederations** that are responsible for developing and representing the JEs on a national level. Confederations are usually run by former Junior Entrepreneurs and are well connected to companies that offer trainings, workshops, or business games for JE members, for example by transferring organisational skills to students to increase the internal efficiency of the Enterprises. This way, students get practical experience and are already tied closely to the labour market.

The **Junior Enterprises Europe Network (JEE or JE Europe**, formerly known as JADE, but rebranded in 2018) as an umbrella organisation based in Brussels is coordinating, representing, and integrating the JE network on a European level. The European Network Strategy enhances cooperation and integration of different countries that collaborate towards the same purpose: empowering students to generate a relevant impact. The international dimension provides the students with a strong contact to countries all around the globe and facilitates the realisation of international projects in synergy between two or more Junior Enterprises. JEE is democratically organised in 16 departments and four executive board members; the internal processes mirror the processes of the European Union.

The Junior Enterprise concept started in Paris in 1967 and has spread to 46 countries around the world. **JE Global** is the pendant to Junior Enterprises Europe on a global level. Worldwide, over 66.000 Junior Entrepreneurs are active in over 1.400 JEs, delivering over 22.800 projects each year (see next paragraph for more details on projects).

"Young people must be given possibilities, opportunities and the ability to seize control of their own future. This is why we can be proud of the work that Junior Enterprises Europe does in bridging the gap between youth and the professional world. You equip our youth with the skillsets to become tomorrow's leaders."

Roberta Metsola

President of the European Parliament, holding a speech at the JEE Winter Conference 2023

Among the goals set out for Junior Enterprises is to promote entrepreneurialism of students in both a business sense and in broader approaches to the identification of challenges and problem-solving. Any student can become involved in a Junior Enterprise. However, Junior Entrepreneurs must demonstrate an entrepreneurial mindset, a willingness to learn, and a willingness to pursue new ideas from the beginning of their involvement in a Junior Enterprise.¹ JEs develop entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs through projects, the implementation of management best practices, encouragement to seek and recognise opportunities to act on and the impetus to produce concrete results to external or internal clients. The areas of projects vary from analysis, market research, implementation studies, digital transition, to technology implementation and are situated within various business areas (e.g. business, engineering, design). Students in JEs invest at least ten hours a week to advance their projects. At the same time, JEs show high levels of student engagement compared to other student organisations, as can be seen in the [JE Europe Annual report 2023](#).

The Junior Enterprise concept also aims to help students become active citizens who are able to apply their entrepreneurial skills to improve society. One example of this is a Junior Enterprise in Switzerland, Junior Enterprise Genève, who created a non-profit law office with the goal of reducing inequality. The law office does so by offering pro bono consultations and legal assistance in more than 10 fields of law and has served at least 200 clients.

From idea generation to business creation

When joining a Junior Enterprise, students work for real clients in a multidisciplinary team to deliver projects related to their fields of study. Therefore, Junior Enterprises offer an equivalence for university entrepreneurial subjects, in which Junior Entrepreneurs receive course credits for undertaking a Junior Enterprise project in lieu of studying. Depending on the country and institution, some universities also acknowledge students' membership in a Junior Enterprise by transferring them credits or providing flexibility in their curricula. Junior Enterprises complement formal education with entrepreneurial practice, enhancing the learning of students through learning-by-doing. The hands-on experience in forming and running a company allows students to apply the theoretical knowledge learned in class in a practical business context. There is a focus on the development of a set of key competences such as leadership, teamwork and a driven attitude to enhance students' employability.

Later, students may become involved in the management of the organisation, including acquiring and managing clients, ensuring the quality of projects, and recruiting and training new students. Eventually some students will be part of the company Executive Board, defining strategies to grow, and coordinating all the activities of the Junior Enterprise. There are several high-profile results from Junior Enterprises across Europe, and here's a few examples²:

¹ Junior Enterprises run a standard, phased recruitment process: i) filling a form to provide personal information and an overview of their experiences, motivations to apply, and knowledge about the Junior Enterprise concept; ii) group assessment to test logical thinking, response to challenges, and which role the student might best perform, iii) an individual interview to test technical and domain knowledge prescient to the role (e.g. marketing or finance)

² See „Excellence Awards“ in the JE Europe Annual report 2023 for more profiles.

- JUNITEC, the oldest JE in Portugal, worked with Isabel, a dedicated psychologist and speech therapist committed to paediatric care, to translate her expertise into "Oficina dos Sons", a digital platform which aims to revolutionise speech therapy, ensuring every child, regardless of circumstances, receives tailored treatment. Beyond its functionality, the final product has demonstrated exceptional real-world results, with +10 psychologists already using it in therapy, as well as several parents, impacting more than 30 children with a spectrum of disorders, from dyslexia to trisomy, with clear transformative results
- Supaero Junior Conseil (France) developed the Higher Education European Project (HEEP), on which they worked collaboratively with Epic Junior (Portugal), JESAP (Italy), and Janus e.V. (Germany). This project not only emphasised the importance of addressing crucial challenges in European Higher Education but also played a key role in fostering concrete exchange of skills and knowledge across JEs
- Dauphine Junior Consulting (France) worked with "En Carta Diagnostics", in collaboration with other Junior Enterprises in Germany, Switzerland, and Sweden. The project they were engaged on aimed to survey different countries regarding their current legislation and gather professional opinions on the feasibility of in vitro diagnostics in pharmacies and among individuals. From the conduction of a quantitative study to the formulation of an extensive questionnaire for pharmacies, they collected 20 highly conclusive responses that were followed by an analytical report supporting concrete operational recommendations

Impacts of being a Junior Entrepreneur

There is evidence that Junior Entrepreneurs' experience positive impacts on their employability.³ When consulted through an evaluation, 90% of Junior Entrepreneurs considered that their Junior Enterprise experience prepared them for the labour market, and 75% stated that it had clarified what they want to do in the future. More than 80% of participating students highlighted the development of their knowledge and competences during their Junior Enterprise experience. Junior Entrepreneurs also compared themselves favourably to their non-Junior Enterprise peers on competences such as networking, adaptability, analysing and risk propensity, and identified communication, leadership, planning and management, and critical thinking as other key competences that were highly developed through their Junior Enterprise experiences.

³ An evaluation of Junior Enterprise concluded that Junior Entrepreneurs are approximately 20% more employable than a student without such experience (78% vs. 59%). Junior Entrepreneurs were also found to grow faster within a company – 65% of Junior Entrepreneurs earn an income above the national average (vs. 55% control group) and 27% two time or more the national average (vs. 17% control group)



Sources

<https://juniorenterprises.eu>

[JE Europe Annual report 2023](#)

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This case study was originally prepared in 2018. It was then updated by Fiona Bauer from Technopolis Germany in May 2024, based on a follow-up interview with Leo Largillet and Giorgia Calvaresi, President and Vice President of JE Europe.