



*Innovative Entrepreneurship for Increased Employability,
New Business Creation and Economic Growth*

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REPORT ON INNOVATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN TURKEY

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1. INTRODUCTION

About MAKRO and GAZİANTEP TEKNOPAK as two partners in Turkey and responsible for the implementation of country based activities in the project:

MAKRO is a management development and consulting company providing tailor-made consulting services to SMEs active in various sectors. The company was founded in 1984 and located in Ankara. Today, MAKRO has a large network of clients and strategic partners in multinational scale.

MAKRO's main scope of activities is listed below:

- Strategic investment management services to public and private institutions
- Strategic management and business planning for SMEs,
- Development of unique entrepreneurship and business idea development tools for who wish to start new effective and sustainable businesses,
- Development and provision of unique trainings in entrepreneurship, internationalization, business planning, financial management and project cycle management.

By relying on its expertise in the these fields, MAKRO has participated a number of EU funded vocational education projects (in Life Long Learning Programme, Erasmus+ Programme and Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance-IPA in Turkey) in the recent years which are mainly targeting; innovative entrepreneurship development for youth, regional and national development, organisational capacity building and skill development of key staff in SMEs.

Looking at the past record of MAKRO in detail, its team:

- has extensive experience in provision of entrepreneurship trainings for youth.
- has provided a number of tailor made consulting and mentoring services for SMEs and start-ups on competitive development of businesses.
- has developed over 100 feasibility studies and business plans for new private and public infrastructure investments and private sector companies at growth stage.
- is extensive experience in foreign direct investment promotion; especially in localization of international companies and decision on feasible investment location.

GAZİANTEP TEKNOPARK was established in 2007 and came into service according to Technology Development Zones Law No 4691 in October 2008. The main aim of Gaziantep Teknopark is to support the creation of synergy between the partners through activities by increasing the cooperation among university, industry and infrastructural/structural opportunities developed for academicians, researchers and companies.

It is located in the campus of Gaziantep University and as 163 acre (163.138 m²) land. There are totally 71 office units available in the Teknopark. Around 30 companies operating in the offices offered in 3.000 m² A Building and 1.250 m² B Building concentrated in R&D mainly in

the field of software, information and communication technologies, industrial design, consulting, food, machinery (calibration) and textile.

Currently, there are 41 enterprises dealing with R&D and innovative operations located in the Gaziantep Teknopark.

Roles of MAKRO and GAZİANTEP TEKNOPARK in the project

MAKRO is the applicant organisation in the project and mainly responsible for the overall administrative management, financial management and quality monitoring and evaluation of the project. Besides, MAKRO is the leader of the development of O4 – ‘Web-based mobile software for Self-assessment, Training and Business Idea Development’ in which all other outputs will be uploaded and served to the target groups of the project. MAKRO is also responsible for the development of O5 – ‘Visibility and Dissemination Tools’.

As the leader of the country based activities, MAKRO has also undertaken active role in:

- Development of O1 – ‘Competence Profile of an Innovative Entrepreneur’ through; in-depth interviews with innovative SMEs in Ankara, development of National Report and development of Consolidated Report on Innovative Entrepreneurship
- Development of O3 – ‘Innovative Entrepreneurship eLearning Modules’ through; development of one of the modules and translation of all modules in Turkish
- The organisation of pilot trainings and multiplier events in Turkey and learning/teaching/training activities.

GAZİANTEP TEKNOPARK, as a partner in Turkey and mostly active in regional/country based activities in the project, has undertaken active role in:

- Development of O1 – ‘Competence Profile of an Innovative Entrepreneur’ through in-depth interviews with innovative SMEs in Gaziantep
- Development of Business Idea Development Tool embedded in O4 through developing best business models by taking advantage of observing their successful tenant companies
- The organisation of pilot trainings and multiplier events in Gaziantep.

Entrepreneurship Ecosystem in Turkey

Turkey is regarded as a centre of attraction, with its geographical location, young population, and strong banking sector. This is supposed to be an opportunity and a favourable environment for Turkey in terms of entrepreneurship.

It is envisaged that about 13 million young people will have entered the business arena within the coming 5 years and current unemployment rate for young generation is around 18%. This is a big pressure on the Turkish economy and social life. In other words, it is essential to create new jobs for young people. Meanwhile, high impact and sustainable entrepreneurship is regarded as the key to creating employment.

Yet, as stated by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) –Country Profile of Turkey and “Entrepreneurship in Turkey” report (2010) which provides a brief overview of the status of Turkish Entrepreneurship, Turkey currently at the efficiency-driven stage of economic

development. Turkey's level of entrepreneurial activity has been representing a significant increase. The average level of early stage entrepreneurial activity (TEA) was 5.9% for the period of 2006-2008; this increased to 12,2% for the period of 2010-2012. Before the financial crisis, about 6 in every 100 adults were entrepreneurs; after the crisis, this figure rose to 12, demonstrating a more positive outlook for entrepreneurship in Turkey.

The prevalence rate for nascent entrepreneurial activity (businesses 0 - 3 months old) for 2006 - 2008 was 2.4%, rising to 5.8% in 2010 - 2012. On the other hand, 3.06% of the adult population in Turkey were owner-managers of new businesses (3 - 42 months old) in 2006 - 2008, increasing to 5.5% in 2010 - 2012. The increased proportion of nascent entrepreneurs can be considered an indicator for new business activity in the future, especially when global economic circumstances improve.

During the two periods, nascent activity showed a larger increase than did new business activity. This indicates a decrease in businesses that have survived beyond the start-up phase. From the policy perspective, supporting and mentoring entrepreneurs through the difficult process of firm birth is critical to the sustainability of start-ups in Turkey.

In 2010, the three best aspects that affected the entrepreneurial climate in Turkey were identified as commercial infrastructure, internal market dynamics and physical infrastructure; while the worst aspects were finance, internal market openness and cultural, social norms.

The lack of confidence in new businesses and entrepreneurs, limited expertise in management, the lack of role models and the inaccessibility to business networks and mentors are among the other barriers underlined by the business world.

Many leaders of the business arena agree that entrepreneurship in Turkey is at a starting level and needs to be improved a lot. As a consequence of that, a good business idea or a product is found sufficient for a successful business disregarding the critical and essential elements such as patents, strong financial models, business plans, market access strategies, etc. This in turn leads to unsuccessful initiatives.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The field research activity has been carried on simultaneously **in Ankara and Gaziantep**, where the Turkish partners are located. Most of the research effort undertaken by GAZIANTEP TEKNOPARK thanks to the high capacity of the organisation in terms of reaching innovative SMEs/start-ups. A limited part of the interviews has been undertaken and conducted by MAKRO in Ankara.

The overall research process, including contacting and getting appointments from the participants, took **two months**.

The main target groups of in-depth interviews (innovative SMEs and start-ups and business support/incubator organisation) have been reached through phone calls and e-mails and **all interviews conducted face-to-face**, except one which conducted through Skype call.

3. INNOVATIVE SMES AND STARTUPS

3.1. Profile of Companies

A total of **9 SMEs, 1 start-up and 1 incubator/accelerator organisation** participated in the research. Majority of the companies (7 companies) are active in **ICT sector**, mainly developing/producing software solutions for various purposes, such as; machine vision, business intelligence solutions, media interfaces, e-trade and mobile systems. 2 companies are active in both **electronics and ICT sectors**, mainly developing/producing hardware and software systems for equipment such as; 3D printers and fibre laser equipment. 1 company is active in machinery manufacturing sector and mainly developing/producing calibration equipment.

Half of the companies (5 companies) established **between 2000 and 2010** and the other half established **between 2010 and 2016**. In terms of number of employees; all companies (except 1) has **between 1 and 9 employees**, and 1 company has between 10-49 employees.

This structure represents that, although we define them as SMEs, they can also be defined as start-ups as they **are newly established and micro enterprises**. However, this sample well represents the general outlook of innovative SMEs which are mostly new born, micro size and active in ICT sector.

3.2. Innovation in Companies

Majority of participants (27 participants), who **represent 8 companies**, consider that their company is **fully innovative**. They justify their opinions for being fully innovative, generally, as:

- they have started their business with no or limited know-how and/or capital for developing/producing totally or partially innovative products,
- they have not remained limited what they already know about the business after company establishment but learned continuously for the sustainable and innovative development of their companies.

3 participants, who represent 2 companies, consider that their company is **partially innovative**. Although they have similar capacity of innovation with the ones who considered as fully innovative, these participants believe that there are some conditions that hamper the innovativeness of their companies. The justifications are summarised below:

- could not be engaging innovation without customer support
- being forced to make innovations which comply with the conditions dictated by the organisations which provide financial support for innovation projects
- not having a proper market vision and marketing strategy
- being have to deal with different sales procedures of the customers, which takes more effort and time devoted for innovation

These participants thus believes that their companies **will become fully innovative** when they could **engage in innovation without customer support, needing financial support**,

high bureaucracy in sales and, by having a proper market vision and marketing strategy.

As all companies are established with a product development vision, the major innovation field stand out in all companies is **product innovation**. Some of them (5 companies) are stated as they are also good at marketing.

In terms of innovation projects, the companies mostly engage in the development of customised innovative products in order satisfy the demand of specific customers. This explains why some participants consider that their company is not fully innovative because of engaging R&D/innovation without internal funding and market vision.

Half of the companies (5 companies) received funding for their **R&D/innovation projects** (mostly at the establishment stage) from the **major national innovation support organisations** in Turkey (TÜBİTAK and KOSGEB). What is interesting here is that these companies, which established with funding for a specific innovation project, are now mostly engaging in other projects independent from the one that the company originated. This also explains their field of interests and power in market can be different than the terms of financial supports provided by public institutions. The entrepreneurs and their teams can sometimes need to modify their R&D ideas according to terms of support schemes.

As majority of companies have a micro structure, **none of the companies have special R&D and innovation leaders or departments**. So, **innovation is still led by the main entrepreneur**, who is also the managing director, as also the R&D/innovation projects generally prompted and led by them. Once prompted by the entrepreneur, **the other team members/key staff (intrapreneurs) have major contributions** in the development of these ideas and management of the projects.

Some of the companies are established and still led by teams consisting of at least two co-founders. The people in these teams mostly have different fields of specialization and thus share the leadership and management of R&D/innovation projects by contributing the overall implementation from different but complementary aspects. This shared leadership structure considered as more effective, than existence of only one leader, by the representative of incubator organisation in Ankara. More details about shared leadership is elaborated in Section 6.

4. INNOVATIVE ENTREPRENEURIAL AND INTRAPRENEURIAL CHARACTERISTICS

4.1. Innovative Entrepreneurial Characteristics

Education Background

All entrepreneurs involved in the study have **technical education background**, mostly related to their companies' field of activity and ranging as; **computer engineering, electrical and electronic engineering, mechanical engineering and knowledge management**. Majority of entrepreneurs (7 out of 10) have **post graduate degrees, mostly at MSc level**,

in the same or similar fields of graduate. Only 1 entrepreneur has MBA in addition to the field specific post graduate degree.

Prior Work Experience and Story of Company Establishment

All entrepreneurs have prior work experience in private sector and related fields. The length of prior work experience differs according the form of company establishment. The entrepreneurs (8 entrepreneurs) who **established the companies upon a 'necessity'** (generally starting self-employment for necessity reasons, such as; could not be satisfied with the working conditions and salary as a young, promising and skilled person) **have 2 years of experience in average.**

On the other hand, the entrepreneurs (2 entrepreneurs) who **established the companies upon an 'opportunity'** (generally voluntarily stepping into self-employment upon a foreseen opportunity or need in the market) **have over 15 years of experience.**

Although majority of entrepreneurs do not consider a direct relationship between the prior work experience and company establishment, **the know-how and experience they gained in the previous work experiences play a key role in the company establishment,** leastwise because they learned how the theoretical expertise can be turned into practice and sold in the market.

The companies, which established with two or more co-founders, are either spin offs from their previous work and/or partnership of friends from school. This represents the physical relationship between prior work experience and company establishment.

As stated in the previous section, **half of the companies received funding for their specific R&D projects from national institutions** which helped them to establish their own businesses. Others made use of their own savings and faced financial difficulties in the beginning as they did not have major finances coming from family and friends.

Traits

The traits of innovative entrepreneurs are mostly similar regardless of their background. The common traits of entrepreneurs that influence the establishment and innovative development of companies are as follows, in sequence of most common to least common:

- Majority of entrepreneurs consider the most distinctive trait of them as being **determined/persevering** on achieving an objective.
- They are **patient**, do not give up easily and **passionate** for success
- They are **foresighted** and have a **proactive vision** of things, this is valuable especially for the success in the market
- They are mostly **curious** and **overhasty**
- Some other traits rarely stated are; **learning fast**, being **courageous** and good at deliberate **risk taking**, **normativeness** and good at setting **emotional and logical balance**

The ideal traits of innovative entrepreneurs, considered by the representative of incubator organisation, differ from the above, however more important in the context of this research as this organisation had chance to observe far more number of entrepreneurs than we observed in this research and has an objective view of entrepreneurial traits. According to their point of

view, innovative entrepreneurs are generally **hardworking** and **productive**, **resistant** and **have a strong stomach for anxiety**, **good at fund raising** and **flexible**.

Motives

Although all entrepreneurs have similar motives, which positively influence the establishment and innovative development of companies, the prominent motives differ according to whether the initiative is upon necessity or opportunity. While **necessity based entrepreneurs** have a major motive of **generating more income**; **opportunity based entrepreneurs** have a major motive of **moral satisfaction**, however both by **developing new technologies which satisfy needs in the market** and **working in an environment which allows continuous learning and self-development**.

The representative of incubator organisation explains the major motives of innovative entrepreneurs from social base perspective. According to this perspective, all entrepreneurs have a **major motive of producing new things by using their skills**. They have more than enough capacity and skills for this but when we think about the labour market; **there is a significant mismatch of skills and the skills required by the market**. Since this is the case, these people seek for other opportunities which allow them to use their skills as much as possible.

4.2. Innovative Intrapreneurial Characteristics

Education Background

While all entrepreneurs have technical education backgrounds, some intrapreneurs (4 out of 19) have **business administration and economics education**. However, still the intrapreneurs with technical education are in majority and education fields range as; **computer engineering, physics engineering and mechanical engineering**.

Over half of the entrepreneurs (11 out of 19) have **post graduate degrees mostly at MSc level** in the same or similar fields of graduate education. **Although the intrapreneurs also represent a significant level of education, entrepreneurs tend to be more educated than intrapreneurs**.

Prior Work Experience and Story of Joining the Company

Majority of intrapreneurs (12 out of 19) has prior work experience; **5 intrapreneurs between 1-5 years, 3 less than 1 year, 3 between 10-20 years and 1 between 5-10 years**. The prior experiences are mostly related to current positions held in the companies, however mostly at lower levels. The level of participation in decision making processes increased in their current jobs as they can be well defined as intrapreneurs.

The prior work experiences perceived as important mainly in terms of getting specific know-how and taking more initiatives which helped them contribute the company's innovative development and also some intrapreneurs have started in these companies by the help of a network developed in the previous work.

Traits

Although the common traits of intrapreneurs differ from the ones of entrepreneurs, they are mostly **similar** but can be regarded as **less assertive**. The common traits of intrapreneurs that influence the innovative development of companies are as follows, in sequence of most common to least common:

- The most prominent trait is **ambitiousness for success** in current job and **learning new things** for contributing to organisational know-how.
- They are mostly **self-disciplined** and **hardworking** individuals, they are **good at planned work**.
- They **like reading** and **exploring**.
- They are sometimes **curious** and **passionate** to some degree.
- Other rare traits; **balanced courageousness, patience, go-getting, straightforwardness, systematic thinking**

Motives

The common motives of intrapreneurs which lead them to more initiatives and contribute to the innovative development of companies are quite similar. They generally feel **the pleasure of working in an environment where it is possible to learn on a continuous base** while also **developing/producing new technologies and using their skills in a proper way**. They found material and nonmaterial satisfaction in their current job, after mostly working with unsatisfying conditions in their prior experiences such as; boss pressure, strict work conditions, lower salaries, etc.

5. INNOVATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INTRAPRENEURSHIP COMPETENCES

5.1. Innovative Entrepreneurship Competences

As all entrepreneurs have technical education and work experience backgrounds, their technical competences are at advanced level. However, regarding soft innovative entrepreneurship competences they sometimes struggled to express those quickly, because they have not thought about them before. Some soft skills revealed are also related to their fields of expertise, such as; **analytical thinking, practical intelligence and problem solving**. Some other more interesting and can be more special for innovative entrepreneurs are expressed as; **always seeing the big picture and join the parts together easily**. Besides, most of them are **good at foreseeing what effort and resources a work can take**.

All innovative entrepreneurs interviewed have developed their competences to a significant extend through **professional experience, observing, exploring and learning by doing**. The education considered to be important for the development of technical competences but have limited impact on the development of innovative entrepreneurship competences.

All entrepreneurs believe that there are key staff (intrapreneurs) in their companies who either complement a significant gap in company operations or create more difference than regular staff. The prominent competences of all intrapreneurs are expressed mostly as they

are **good at systematic and disciplined work**. They are also **flexible and open to changes**.

The entrepreneurs believe that the competences embedded in entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs are **complementing each other and all together play important role in the overall innovative development of companies**. This well explains that **innovation is a team work**.

The entrepreneurs mostly believe that the **innovative entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship competences are trainable**, thus can be acquired in after life, however **with the condition of having a certain education/training base**. Some entrepreneurs state that some competences are **innate or quite challenging to be improved from scratch** since there are many parameters which affect the improvement, such as; personality, environment, education, etc.

The table below represents the average scores and rankings of the competences that are perceived as important by the entrepreneurs and summarized opinions about what each means for them.

Table 1. Ranking and Average Score of Competences with Brief Definitions (according to entrepreneurs)

Competence	Definition	Ranking	Average Score
Creative thinking	A process of thinking which result in new ideas and products.	1	4,9
Problem solving	Developing and finding the best solution for a specific problem	1	4,9
Innovation management	Fast categorization of new innovation ideas, management of process with all components, includes control over IPR	2	4,5
Rapid experimentation	Rapid development of proof of concept of a product, needed especially for the projects without a funding scheme and demanded by customers	3	4,4
Leadership, motivation and team management	All together means 'synergy' which helps getting more effective results	3	4,4
Business model generation	The road mapping of the development of a new or improved product	4	4
Strategic planning	Involves the overall process of determining the position of the company in the future	4	4
Risk management	The analysis of risks which may arise between different operations in the company and taking necessary measures in order to remove those risks	5	3,9

Agile management	Helps fast moving in changing business environment and complex situations	6	3,5
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The entrepreneurs believe that the following **contents/features** should be included in an **eLearning/mLearning program** designed for the competence development of potential innovative entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs:

- Training contents on **finance and accounting**, which are significant for especially entrepreneurs with technical education background
- Contents on **how to access funds and other sources of finance** in partner countries
- A space which enables **interaction between other users and team work**

5.2. Innovative Intrapreneurship Competences

Similar to entrepreneurs, since majority of intrapreneurs have technical backgrounds, their **technical competences are at good level**. However, as they **play a more of a supporting role** in the development and implementation of entrepreneurs' initiatives within the companies, their intrapreneurship competences are shaped by the mixture of these supporting roles and fields of profession. They are mostly **good at systematic and analytical thinking combined with a significant level of work discipline**. They are **adaptable to different situations** and **good at communication to some degree**.

All intrapreneurs believe that, they have developed these competences mostly through a **combination of education and professional experience**. However the impact of experience is always more than education, similar to the entrepreneurs' development. They state that while the impact of experience is 70%, the impact of education is 30%.

The intrapreneurs consider that **there are other intrapreneurs** in their companies who **have similar competences** but mostly **complementary** to all competences embedded in entrepreneur and intrapreneurs. The expressed competences embedded in entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs are regarded as; **having solution oriented approach, leadership and team management**. The complementary competences differ according to the position in the company. For instance; while an entrepreneur is good at integrated approach, the intrapreneurs complement him/her with their individual competences such as problem solving competence of one intrapreneur, communication/promotion competence of one and systematic approach of one. Thus, all competences within the company play a role in the innovative development separately.

The intrapreneurs also believe that these competences can be **trainable to some degree**, but the **training is a continuous process and needs to be started too early** by considering that there are many parameters influencing the overall development.

The table below represents the average scores and rankings of the competences that are perceived as important by the intrapreneurs and summarized opinions about what each means for them.

Table 2. Ranking and Average Score of Competences with Brief Definitions (according to intrapreneurs)

Competence	Definition	Ranking	Average Score
Creative thinking	The skill of awareness on what can be changed by the use of an idea and new ideas for further development of products	1	4,8
Problem solving	The situation analysis about a problem, searching for solutions and solving the problem with the best solution method	2	4,6
Leadership, motivation and team management	The skills all together help revealing the creative potential of a team	2	4,6
Innovation management	Systematic management of research and development activities	3	4,5
Business model generation	Development of the overall process of development, production, financing, marketing of a product in a simpler way than business plan	4	4,4
Agile management	A fast and value-driven approach to project management	4	4,4
Rapid experimentation	Fast testing of a the feasibility of a new product	5	4,3
Strategic planning	The overall result oriented effort with the contribution and support of all members in a company	5	4,3
Risk management	The development and continuous monitoring of the negative scenarios in the time plan of a project	6	4,2

The intrapreneurs have similar ideas about what kind of **contents/features** should be included in an **eLearning/mLearning program** designed for the competence development of entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs:

- The users should be provided with the **possibility of communicating each other** in order to share the common problems they face and help each other for solutions
- The program can provide **up to date information about what is going on in innovative sectors** in their countries and in the world

6. ANECDOTES FROM INTERVIEWS

Some interesting observations from the interviews:

- Intrapreneurs generally **less tolerate the risks** compared to entrepreneurs.
- When the interviewees asked to prioritize the competences for entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs, most of the time, they evaluated the competences as each

interdependently. They consider that some of the competences are equally important as all entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs should have and that is why majority of competences evaluated in Tables 1 and 2 have close scales.

- As all innovative SMEs interviewed are started with product innovations and most of them are still young, focused on products and have number of employees, **product innovation is only field that all of them are good at.** None of them mentioned about organisational innovation.
- The entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs in some of the companies, where the company has been established and managed by the collaboration of more than two entrepreneurs, consider that **'leadership' is not an important competence**, this competence should even be suppressed in such structures. Because almost all decisions made altogether. On the other hand, **motivation management is a competence that all team members should have**, in order to motivate each other when necessary.

Some interesting anecdotes from the interviews:

Representative from incubator organisation – “Contrary to popular myth, in general leadership is not a competence for only one person it is mostly shared. A team of leaders or one person should have the following characteristics to be called as ‘leader’:

1. Continuity
2. Consistency
3. Depth (know – how in the field)
4. Skills
5. Diversity (if leadership is shared by two or more people)
6. Coordination”

An intrapreneur – “I do not believe that the senior students are the potential entrepreneurs. They need to gain professional experience first and then take their first steps in entrepreneurship. Otherwise, their initiatives cannot be sustainable.”

An entrepreneur – “The skill of continuous learning and learning from the right resources is very important for entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs, especially in ICT sector.”

An entrepreneur – “Strategic management and risk management can hinder innovation, if they are too prioritised. They are important, yes, should stay in the background of R&D and innovation activities.”