

Insights Paper

Better Incubation Pilots

Impact Report

by LIAISE - Linking Incubation Actors
for Inclusive and Social Entrepreneurship

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List of Abbreviations

BSO	Business Support Organisation
CoP	Community of Practice
EBN	European Business and Innovation Centre Network
EU	European Union
EVPA	European Venture Philanthropy Association
IHUB	Impact Hub
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PwD	People with Disabilities
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

Introduction

Better Incubation was a 2-year (2021-2022) joint initiative of EBN (European Business Innovation Centre Network), Impact Hub and EVPA, powered by the LIAISE project, funded under the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation.

The project's objective was to foster inclusive and social entrepreneurship in Europe by mobilising and empowering business support organisations (BSOs) with the capacities (skills, methods, approaches) needed to effectively help social enterprises and entrepreneurs from underrepresented groups access financial tools and expand and grow their businesses.

The initiative aimed to promote entrepreneurship and self-employment as means to create jobs, develop skills, and give unemployed or otherwise vulnerable populations the opportunity to fully participate in the economy.

Better Incubation aimed to enhance the inclusiveness of Business Support Organisations by stimulating a wider cultural change in the incubation ecosystem, therefore involving regional and EU stakeholders (investors, policymakers, social actors, Business Support Organisations) that can contribute to this paradigm shift.

Key objectives of the programme were to:

- Provide BSOs with adequate knowledge and tools to pilot incubation programmes for social and inclusive enterprises/potential entrepreneurs
- Enhance the diversity/inclusiveness of BSOs
- Improve the tracking/performance of BSOs
- Encourage the scaling of impact driven entrepreneurship across Europe

To this end, five thematic Communities of Practice (CoP) were formed, each targeting a specific group of underrepresented entrepreneurs: women, migrants/refugees, people with disabilities, youth and seniors. The COPs developed best practices for better incubation of underrepresented groups. These best practices were then piloted by the 20 BSOs from Impact Hub and EBN. CoP members came together to learn from each other, codify tools and processes, build new knowledge on better incubation for the sector, and develop policy recommendations. The findings that resulted from the impact measurement of the pilots are presented in this insights paper and can inform future best practices and policies in inclusive incubation.

The need for Better Incubation

As remarked by the European Commission and the OECD, inclusive entrepreneurship is an integral part of inclusive growth. As such, business creation by people from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups (e.g. women, youth, seniors, immigrants, people with disabilities) helps generate jobs, thereby fighting social and financial exclusion while stimulating economic growth.

Evidence shows that entrepreneurs from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups are, on average, less likely to operate high-growth firms because they lack the skills, networks, and access to finance needed for growth. At the same time, they are also less likely to express motivation to grow their business.

Similarly, social enterprises are longstanding agents of inclusive growth and have proved remarkably resilient in the face of economic adversity.

By design, social enterprises address socio-economic challenges in innovative ways and engage citizens to become part of the solution.

Overall, there is evidence (EU/OECD, 2019) that business incubators and business accelerators can be effective support actors for new and growing businesses, and evaluations suggest similar results can be achieved in business incubators that focus on supporting entrepreneurs from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups. The keys to success for these initiatives include offering strong pre-incubation services, building strong linkages with mainstream business support providers and investors, delivering support in flexible modules, and ensuring incubator staff are trained to support the targeted entrepreneurs.

The five target groups



WOMEN

The European business and entrepreneurship ecosystems are far from being diverse and inclusive. According to OECD's policy brief on women entrepreneurship, women in the European Union were half as likely than men to be self-employed in 2015 (9.9% vs. 17.8%), and also women's new business ownership rate was half that of men. This gap can be explained by deep structural imbalances against female business founders, such as lack of access to finance, low opportunity perception regarding entrepreneurship among women, lack of role models or competing demands on time, with a double burden on home and work responsibilities for women.



MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Of the 447.2 million inhabitants in the EU, 37.5 million (8.4%) have been born outside of the EU. Due to the ongoing war in Ukraine, by September 2022 3.9 million refugees from Ukraine alone have been recorded across Europe. Refugees' participation rate in the labour market tends to be lower than that of the native population. Entrepreneurship therefore represents a great opportunity for refugees and other migrants to rebuild their lives and contribute to the economy and society of their new home country. Their entrepreneurial potential is often thwarted by multiple cultural, social and economic barriers resulting in isolation, limited access to financial capital or challenges in establishing a customer's networks. Relevant business support services can help address these challenges, but it needs to be accompanied by a change of the mindset in the sector to better reflect on the real needs of migrant entrepreneurs.



YOUTH

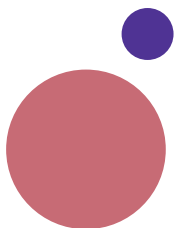
Youth unemployment represents one of the major social and economic challenges in Europe, with 13% of them being unemployed in 2021. Moreover, being a young person (15-34 years old) who is not in education, employment or training (NEET) can lead to marginalisation from society and can have long term negative effects on the life prospects. In response to the challenges young people encounter when searching for jobs, entrepreneurship offers an alternative pathway to economic self-sufficiency. Despite the enthusiasm for self-employment, relatively few young people are engaged in entrepreneurship (only 6.6% of working youth (20-29 years old) in the European Union were self-employed in 2017), facing greater obstacles to busi-

ness creation than older generations. These difficulties stem from market and institutional failures, including lack of role models and professional connections, negative concepts about their entrepreneurial skills, or limited access to investment opportunities. Critical success conditions can be provided by training and incubation programmes targeted at the youth to nurture their entrepreneurial attitudes and skills.



SENIORS

With the ongoing demographic change and population ageing in Europe, supporting entrepreneurial skills and becoming self-employed could be considered as innovative ways to continue the professional activity for middle-aged group workers (50+). Like all entrepreneurs, older people face certain barriers when starting a business. These include difficulties with mastering digital skills, health issues or social isolation. Economic sustainability of the businesses established by senior entrepreneurs is often not the primary goal in these undertakings, and they seem to have more socially oriented goals. These demographic changes also affect business incubation support services because a new growing client group is emerging.



PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

It is estimated that 16% of the population over 15 in the EU has some form of disability. The complexity of this group stems from the fact that disabilities are extremely diverse and are not a fixed characteristic of individuals. People with disabilities face many barriers in the labour market, and employer discrimination is frequently reported. It is the self-employment which can enable them an easier entry into the labour market, flexibility in terms of workload, work schedule and location. The traditional business support programmes are rarely targeting people with disabilities. Business support organisations should ensure that their entire process and information meet the universal accessibility requirements, which will allow people with disabilities to participate on equal terms with others.

Methodology

Based on the existing evidence on entrepreneur support and the hypotheses of the programme, an impact measurement and management (IMM) framework was developed for Better Incubation.

First, a general Theory of Change for entrepreneur support was outlined:

#1

ACTIVITIES

- **Access to networks:** Access & connections to peers, mentors, business experts and networks, potential partners, customers, investors/funders
- **Entrepreneurial skills:** Personal development coaching
- **Business and impact skills:**
 - Workshops and trainings
 - Testing & refining of business model
 - Business Mentoring
 - Help measuring social impact
- **Workspace:** Office space/BSO coworking space
- **Direct funding from the programme (if included)**

#2

OUTPUTS

- **Access to networks:**
 - # of networking events organised
 - # of actors per group (e.g. investors) participating
 - # of participants attending events
- **Entrepreneurial/Business/Impact skills:**
 - # of Training events organised
 - # of Ventures trained
 - # of participants trained
- **Workspace:**
 - # of participants accessing work space
 - Total/average # of hours of co-working used
- **Funding:** Total amount of funding provided

#3

END OF PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

- **Improved Access to Support Network:**
 - # of participants with improved networks
 - # of new connections made
 - # of new partnerships made
 - # of new customers acquired
- **Improved Entrepreneurial Skills**
 - # of participants reporting improved leadership skills
- **Improved business/impact skills**
 - # of participants reporting improved business skills
 - # of participants reporting improved impact management skills
- **Improved access to finance**
 - Total amount of external funding secured (per type)
 - # of ventures securing external funding
- **Enterprise:**
 - # of projects achieving their programme objectives
 - # of new products/services/ventures

#4

POST-PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

- **Innovations/Ventures Grow and Scale:**
 - # of ventures addressing specific social and environmental challenges
 - # of beneficiaries or customers
 - Environmental and social impact reached with innovations/products/service
 - Increased revenues
 - Increased staff
 - External funding secured
- **Ecosystem impacts:**
 - More successful social innovators/entrepreneurs & role models, who in turn become mentors to others
 - More social innovations/ventures
 - Strengthened impact ecosystem
- **Societal impacts:**
 - More innovations address/solve social/environmental problems
 - More inclusive and sustainable societies and economies

Secondly, with input and feedback from the pilots participating in the Communities of Practice, specific outcomes were defined for the different target groups. The specific outcomes can be found in each target group's chapter.

Outcomes (and results) are structured around the key themes of:

- Entrepreneurial culture
- Business and impact skills
- Access to networks
- Increased social support
- Access to finance

This classification is based both on the theory of change for Better Incubation as well as the Better Entrepreneurship Policy Tool by the OECD and EU.

Measurement of these outcomes was then prototyped through conducting baseline and end-line surveys alongside the pilots. The findings that resulted from the impact measurement of the pilots are presented in the following chapters and form the basis of this paper. In addition, the report draws on qualitative data from the CoPs, which was collected through group evaluation discussions, journals, and reports. Furthermore, insights from the Better Incubation Best Practice Collection and Toolkit were integrated or are referred to where applicable.

Summary of cross-cutting insights

Entrepreneurial culture

- Under entrepreneurial culture, entrepreneurs were asked to rate their level of agreement with a set of statements relating to entrepreneurship, leadership, and personal agency.
- With the help of the Better Incubation pilots, entrepreneurs made significant gains in terms of clarity about their next steps and how to take them, across all target groups.
- Pilots had varying effects on the confidence of entrepreneurs to refine actionable project ideas (very early stage) and to start a venture (early to growth stage):
- The pilots led to an increase in confidence to start a venture for women and senior entrepreneurs. That confidence was already high for migrant entrepreneurs and stayed high throughout the pilots.
- With the help of the pilots, youth entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs with disabilities increased their confidence in refining an actionable idea or maintained it at a high level. However, their confidence in starting a venture dropped in the course of the programmes.
- These results probably have less to do with the particular target groups and more with the fact that women, migrants, and senior entrepreneurs tended to be at a later stage on their entrepreneurial journey than entrepreneurs of young age or with disabilities, for whom refining a project idea is the very first step to entrepreneurship. Going through an incubation programme and learning about what it takes to start a venture might lead to some entrepreneurs feeling less confident in their ability to start a business. Incubators might want to be aware of this and pay attention to supporting the learning and growth of entrepreneurs over time.
- Women and senior entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs with disabilities also were able to increase their ability to translate needs, wants, ideas and aspirations into actionable goals with the help of the pilot programmes (not asked of youth and migrant entrepreneurs).
- Women and migrant entrepreneurs as well as entrepreneurs with disabilities reduced their rating for their ability to manage stress effectively and taking sufficient time for recovery, while senior and young entrepreneurs increased that ability or kept it stable. Women, migrants, and entrepreneurs with disabilities might face particularly high demands or stressors placed on them due to additional care responsibilities, high uncertainty, health limitations, etc. Incubators working with these target groups might want to pay particular attention to offering support services and tools that help these entrepreneurs manage stress more effectively.

Business and impact skills

- Entrepreneurs were asked to rate their business and impact skills at the beginning and end of the pilots. Some of the most notable skill increases by entrepreneurs were made for business model development, marketing, pitching, networking, sales, and product or service development.
- Entrepreneurs in the more advanced pilots (mainly women, migrants, seniors) increased the most on skills relating to networking, investment readiness, sales, product market fit, and business model development.
- For the more early-stage entrepreneurs (youth, entrepreneurs with disabilities, and some senior entrepreneurs) skill increases were most pronounced for business model development, product and service development, marketing and sales, and pitching.
- Overall, the findings as well as reflections with pilot leaders suggest that the particular target group is less relevant in terms of skill development and instead incubators should differentiate according to venture stage. Each venture stage comes with a particular set of challenges, from prototyping an idea and developing a product, to refining the business model and getting investment ready and more. Consequently, different skills need to be developed at different stages of the entrepreneurial journey. Especially for youth and when working at the very early stages of entrepreneurship, incubators might want to consider a set of “pre-entrepreneurship” skills and competencies to develop before moving on to the types of skills being trained in typical incubation programmes.
- The business model canvas has been used successfully across several pilots and is a simple tool to help entrepreneurs develop and continuously refine their venture and communicate their ideas to others.

Increase in support

- An increase in social support for entrepreneurs from underserved communities had been identified as an outcome incubators could work towards. Entrepreneurs were asked to rate how supported they feel by peers, friends, family, and business support organisations.
- Incubators can influence peer relationships the most.
- Support from peers increased strongly for all target groups except for migrant and refugee entrepreneurs for whom it increased to a lesser extent. Average peer support received was the highest for youth and seniors with about 10 hours a month. Women and migrant entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs with disabilities reported around 4-5 hours a month.
- Women and seniors reported the highest levels of reciprocity (“The time and support I invest in others comes back to me over time”), followed by youth entrepreneurs. Reported reciprocity was low for migrant entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs with disabilities.
- Peer support had a particularly strong effect on the entrepreneurial motivation of women, and also positively influenced all other target groups.
- Youth and senior entrepreneurs reported an increased support from business support organisations by the end of the pilots. Perceived support from business support organisations stayed stable for women and migrant entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs with disabilities.

- Pilots had little to no effect on support from family with the exception of migrant entrepreneurs whose support from family increased. They had some effect on the support received from friends, mainly for entrepreneurs with disabilities and migrant and senior entrepreneurs. Overall, given the fact that incubators cannot directly influence these stakeholders, it is questionable whether they should be included in outcomes measurement.

Access to networks

- Entrepreneurs were asked to rate their satisfaction with their access to various stakeholders at the beginning and at the end of the pilots.
- Entrepreneurs' satisfaction with their access stakeholders increased across the board and was most pronounced for business experts, advisors, mentors, and coaches.
- Women entrepreneurs were the only target group showing marked improvements in satisfaction with their access to peers. It might be that the pilots for women entrepreneurs placed a stronger emphasis on creating peer connections and/or women entrepreneurs might value, and have found more value, in the collaboration with peers and building a supportive community of other women entrepreneurs.
- Later-stage entrepreneurs were also able to increase their satisfaction with their access to potential partners, customers, and team members, and to a lesser extent, investors and funders.
- Entrepreneurs made on average 5 new valuable professional connections and 1 new partnership due to their participation in the pilots.

Access to finance

- Entrepreneurs were asked about their financial setup and ownership of financial assets as this can be regarded as increasing the likelihood of successfully raising capital. Almost all entrepreneurs had access to a personal bank account. About half of entrepreneurs had access to a savings account or a business plan in place. Less than half of the entrepreneurs had a bank account for their business, good credit rating, or ownership of financial assets. There was a lot of variation between the target groups with migrant entrepreneurs having the most, and youth entrepreneurs having the least solid financial setup.
- Later stage entrepreneurs (migrants, women, seniors) were more likely to seek funding in the course of the pilots than early-stage entrepreneurs (youth, people with disabilities). Among later stage entrepreneurs about one quarter of those who provided data and sought funding succeeded in raising funds in the course of their pilot, with women entrepreneurs being the most likely to raise funding.

A NOTE ON SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Better Incubation programme recognizes inclusive and social entrepreneurship as integral parts to sustainable and inclusive economic growth. The concepts of social and inclusive entrepreneurship are closely intertwined. While inclusive entrepreneurship enables access and participation of entrepreneurs from underrepresented groups, social entrepreneurship addresses socio-economic challenges in innovative ways and engages citizens to become part of the solution. In the context of Better Incubation, social entrepreneurship holds relevance on several levels, from entrepreneurs from underrepresented groups becoming social entrepreneurs and prioritising social impact over profit maximisation, to social enterprises who work with underrepresented groups as employees (e.g. work integration social enterprises) or customers.

Because of these interlinkages between inclusive and social entrepreneurship it comes as no surprise that 81% of participating enterprises in the Better Incubation programme who provided data have an explicit intent to create social or environmental impact and many of the enterprises build solutions for underrepresented groups, often the ones that entrepreneurs belong to themselves. As such, business incubators focusing on inclusive entrepreneurship do not only have an impact on the entrepreneurs from underrepresented groups who they serve, but also an indirect impact on society as they promote the creation of social enterprises serving underrepresented groups at large.



Women entrepreneurs

Barriers to entrepreneurship for women entrepreneurs

Women still face a multitude of challenges when it comes to entrepreneurship, ranging from financial and access to market barriers, to cultural and social barriers, systemic barriers and individual barriers.

The gender pay gap does not only exist in regular employment but also for self-employment. Within the European Union, self-employed women may earn 30% to 35% less than their male counterparts. In addition, while self-employment/entrepreneurship allows on the one hand, for more freedom at work and a more flexible schedule, it on the other hand provides less of a safety net in terms of maternity protection and other benefits when compared to other sectors.

Moreover, there is a gender gap in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education with women being underrepresented in STEM fields. The gender gap in STEM education is a contributing factor in women being much more likely to engage in businesses in wholesale and retail trade or government, health education, and social services, which tend to have lower entry barriers, but also lower margins and higher failure rates. Furthermore this might be contributing to a scale bias in women's businesses, that is, women entrepreneurs tend to expand horizontally rather than vertically, tending to be overrepresented in micro and small enterprises and underrepresented in bigger enterprises.

There also is a lack of adequate disaggregated data and/or analysis on gender and entrepreneurship. This factor can be considered as a challenge for women entrepreneurs, given that this type of information allows for targeted public policy-making. Many European countries already have advanced systems of linked business and population. However, the low comparability of existing data makes up for another barrier as it is complicated to produce international benchmarks, which are essential to identifying achievable targets and understanding the effects of policy reforms.

In addition to systemic barriers, women entrepreneurs also face other barriers to access finance and markets. First, the gender-financing gap in entrepreneurship is well documented and continues to persist, especially in equity financing. Second, compared to their male counterparts, women tend to suffer from the lack of contacts and access to social support and networking. Women have fewer professional networks that they can leverage to access business-related resources and advice.

Third, "business development service providers" do not give adequate time or effort to target women entrepreneurs – they do not offer flexible arrangements in respect of the timing and location of service

delivery". Finally, there is a lack of role models: the overall lower likelihood that women know an entrepreneur(s) suggests there might be some social network differences in men's and women's ecosystems as well, and that directly contributes to the understanding of entrepreneurship as a viable option.

In addition to systemic, financial, and market barriers, there are also barriers related to low risk tolerance, negative perceptions of entrepreneurship, low confidence, and imposter syndrome. Specifically, in the European context, when compared to men, women have lower preferences for self-employment because it is perceived as too risky. Similarly, there is a low opportunity perception regarding entrepreneurship among women. Entrepreneurial intentions for women are lowest in high-income countries, in part because women have many opportunities for employment other than entrepreneurship. Europe reports the lowest opportunity perceptions as well as the lowest female capabilities perception among regions.

Lastly, women entrepreneurs operate in an environment marked by cultural and social barriers. This includes unequal household power relations, unequal division of labour and limited access to household resources. These factors are all connected to the predominant patriarchal cultural model, and discourage entrepreneurship as they define women's socio-cultural roles and create expectations regarding what they should be doing or not. Women in employment and entrepreneurship face competing demands on their time. There is still a double burden of home, care, and work responsibilities for women, which prevents them from starting or carrying on a self-employed business. Similarly, prejudices and stereotypes about women in business can prevent them from considering entrepreneurship as a viable option in the first place. In the worst cases, women in business and entrepreneurship face gender-based discrimination, violence and harassment. These constitute common experiences for women when registering and operating their enterprises in that their skills and ability to start and grow a venture are frequently underestimated and questioned by actors in the entrepreneurial ecosystem; there's a constant feeling of pressure to prove themselves more than men in order to convince partners, customers, and funders of their expertise and venture; and there's a frequent misuse of power by funders or partners that ask for personal favours in return for investment or contracts.

Outcomes for women entrepreneurs and best practices

To help women entrepreneurs succeed and reduce the gender gap in entrepreneurship and incubation, it is important for incubators to be aware of the many barriers women entrepreneurs face compared to their male counterparts.

In order to become inclusive, incubators should work towards the following outcomes for women entrepreneurs:

- Increase in confidence and agency to start and run a venture
- Increase in skills:
 - Soft-skills, in particular: pitching, negotiation, and networking skills
 - Hard-skills, in particular: financial analysis and management, technology
- Increase in social support for the entrepreneur, especially from peers
- Increase in access to relevant business networks, mentors, and experts and networking opportunities

- Improved access to finance and increased financial literacy, financial independence and power over financial assets
- Improved compatibility of entrepreneurship and motherhood/care responsibilities

To contribute to these outcomes, incubators can draw on a set of best practices from programme design, to recruitment and selection, and programme delivery. The Women CoP consisted of pilots run by 4 incubators in Germany (19 entrepreneurs), the Netherlands (9 entrepreneurs), France (9 entrepreneurs) and Austria (3 entrepreneurs).

The New Roots programme by Impact Hub Munich supported 19 mothers on their path to entrepreneurship and self-employment. Entrepreneurs were supported through workshops, mentorship, and peer to peer community building activities which strengthened women entrepreneurs' resilience, confidence and self-perception as entrepreneurs. The programme also provided on-site childcare to make it easier for mothers to attend and follow through.

Impact Hub Amsterdam piloted and monitored best practices for supporting 9 women entrepreneurs in two mixed-gender incubation programmes for early-stage entrepreneurs. The programmes included different activities such as inspirational talks, networking opportunities, hands-on training, an online academy, peer support, workspace, and more. Impact Hub Amsterdam also created a toolkit to support female entrepreneurship in the impact space, with a focus on representation and role models in programme elements as well as on social media.

The programme by EU|BIC Laval Mayenne Technopole supported 9 women entrepreneurs in increasing their confidence, establishing their leadership, learning how to mobilise people and developing their entrepreneurial capacity. The programme consisted of 3 collective workshops on topics such as self-limiting beliefs, leadership, and storytelling, and a dedicated mentoring session for each participant.

The EU|BIC accent incubator focuses on the promotion of women in leadership and business start-ups. The programme works with experienced professionals: participants are on average 35 - 45 years old, have a graduate degree, existing network and on average 10 years of work experience. The pilot supported 3 entrepreneurs with workshops and boot camps, mentoring, pitch development, access to funding, and more.

Best practices in incubating and accelerating women entrepreneurs are summarised in the Better Incubation Collection of Best Practices in Inclusive Entrepreneurship Programmes and the Better Incubation Toolkit. The following selected best practices were tested by the pilots and proved to be particularly effective for incubating women entrepreneurs.

Use outreach partners for the scouting of underrepresented entrepreneurs

A best practice in Better Incubation is to work with outreach partners to scout participants from the target group. Impact Hub Munich worked with partners to recruit women entrepreneurs who were also mothers and thus faced additional care responsibilities.

“We approached network organisations working with the target group of mothers and having their trust instead of doing a big outreach campaign via social media. That worked quite well since I have the feeling we reached mothers that would not have applied otherwise and would not have the confidence to do so having received anything in return.”

Impact Hub Munich

Engage people from the target group as mentors

In inclusive incubation it is important to not only include people from underrepresented groups as participants, but to engage them in the delivery of the programme as coaches, mentors, jury members, etc.

“Throughout the duration of the programme we offered different workshops and 1:1 mentoring with female entrepreneurs from the Impact Hub Community. 4 out of 5 mentors were female entrepreneurs from our community.”

Impact Hub Munich

“We hosted a keynote speaker during the jury decision making, who was the winner of the last Business Model Challenge programme. She presented her company that she founded with 3 female founders. It was really good to have role models in the jury and for the keynote, especially since they were also programme alumni.”

Impact Hub Amsterdam

Foster peer connections and community

Inclusive incubation programmes can create spaces for women entrepreneurs to connect with each other and build a community of peer support that lasts beyond the end of the programme.

“It is important to provide a space for female entrepreneurs in the programme to get together, share needs and connect. Within our programmes, the cohort makes use of a Slack workspace where I can create a separate channel for the female founders - an easy way to provide them with extra help”

Impact Hub Amsterdam

“By becoming a part of the Impact Hub Community and using a variety of peer learning methodologies and formats, we aimed to build a resilient support system and community for the mothers and to strengthen their confidence and self-image as entrepreneurs. This helped minimise drop-out rates and increased the probability of successfully pursuing self-employment.”

Impact Hub Munich

Focus on soft skills and leadership development

Entrepreneurship support is not only about hard skills. Strengthening entrepreneurs’ confidence and entrepreneurial capacity through tailored soft skills development is highly relevant when working with underrepresented entrepreneurs such as women.

“Our programme focused on the development of soft skills in order to increase women entrepreneurs’ confidence, leadership, ability to mobilise people, and entrepreneurial capacity. From the data we see that we were able to successfully meet these objectives.”

EU|BIC
Laval Mayenne Technopole

Offer childcare solutions

Women entrepreneurs who are mothers often face additional challenges to entrepreneurship. Due to a variety of factors such as gender stereotypes, lack of childcare support, patriarchal systems, etc. women still tend to carry the majority of care responsibilities. Impact Hub Munich focused on women entrepreneurs who are also mothers and decided to offer flexible, on-site childcare to support mothers who did not have another stable form of childcare. This was valued by participants. EU|BIC Laval Mayenne Technopole also noted how the Covid pandemic exacerbated childcare issues further and posed challenges for women entrepreneurs’ ability to attend workshops.

“The childcare during the face-to-face workshops was a dream! The online workshops were difficult when you have children who cannot yet be looked after by someone else. Otherwise, it was great how flexible the programme was and really easy to arrange!”

Entrepreneur,
Impact Hub Munich

Increase the representation and visibility of underrepresented entrepreneurs

Beyond the direct programme activities, incubators can highlight and promote women entrepreneurs online and in the entrepreneurial ecosystem to improve representation.

“We highlighted female founders and programme alumni on the website and ran a social media campaign on female entrepreneurship and empowerment. Additionally, we’ve been able to design a new marketing framework for future programmes on how to expand the visibility of female entrepreneurship at Impact Hub Amsterdam. This was not an initial objective but an outcome of the project, and something we want to blueprint in future programming - an impact bigger than anticipated. This way, we hope to showcase more diverse role models and build the connection and communication between programmes and sectors”

Entrepreneur,
Impact Hub Munich

Results of the Better Incubation programme

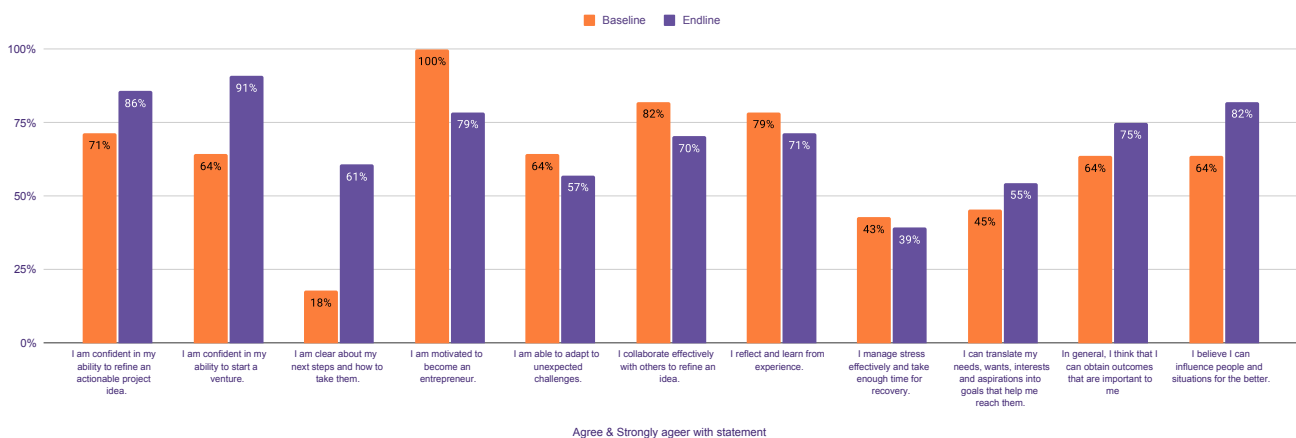
Baseline and endline data were available from women entrepreneurs who participated in the pilots in the Netherlands, Germany, and France. Baseline data was collected from 37 entrepreneurs, 28 participants contributed with both baseline and endline data. Some data points are only available for 18 women entrepreneurs from the pilots in the Netherlands and France.

At the start of the programme 61% of women entrepreneurs were either self-employed or running a business with employees. 78% of participants described their venture as being at idea or startup stage.

85% of women entrepreneurs intend to create social or environmental impact with their initiative or venture. The main industries the entrepreneurs are active in are wholesale and retail (24%), health and social work (18%), education (12%), arts, entertainment and recreation (12%).

ENTREPRENEURIAL CULTURE

Participating women entrepreneurs were asked to rate their level of agreement with a set of statements relating to entrepreneurship, leadership, as well as personal agency and power, which is particularly relevant for women entrepreneurs.



The programmes made the steepest difference on participants' clarity on next steps and how to take them. While only 18% of participants felt clear about their next steps at the start of the programmes, 61% of them did so by the end. Participants also strongly increased their confidence in their ability to start a venture, from 64% at baseline to 91% at endline.

Furthermore, women entrepreneurs increased their feelings of agency, with marked improvements between baseline and endline in regards to the ability to translate needs and aspirations into actionable goals, confidence in obtaining outcomes that are important to them, and belief in their ability to positively influence people and situations.

"My situation was blocked at the beginning of the training. During the training I regained self-confidence and I dared to ask for help and as a result I had proposals for manufacturing and also for partnerships."

Participant, EU|BIC
Laval Mayenne Technopole

“Now I can clearly see the path I need to take to become a freelance writing teacher. I have concrete ideas and am working on the concepts. There is also a name for my company and a website.”

Participant
New Roots Programme
by Impact Hub Munich

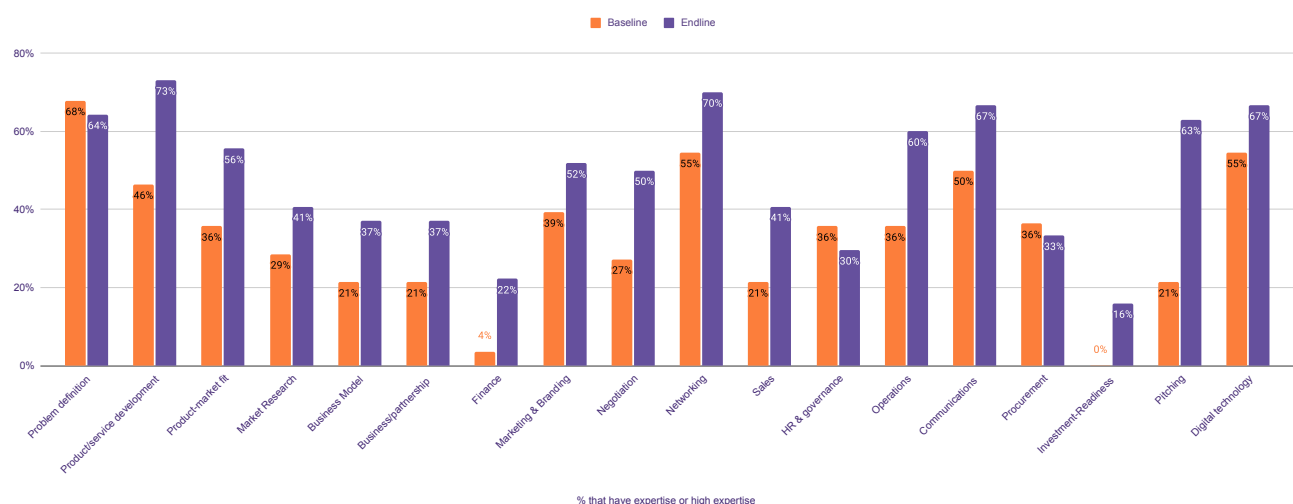
For some of the statements we see a decline rather than an increase between baseline and endline. While for example all respondents agreed to being motivated to become an entrepreneur at the start of their programmes, that number had dropped to just below 80% at the end of the programme.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Entrepreneurial culture outcomes for women entrepreneurs are increased confidence and agency to start and run a venture. As outlined, barriers to entrepreneurship such as low confidence, impostor syndrome, higher risk aversion compared to men, and low opportunity perception all negatively impact women’s entrepreneurial ambitions and entrepreneurial activity.
- The results show that with the help of the incubation programmes, participants made large strides in terms of clarity about next steps (43 percentage points) and confidence in their ability to start and run a venture (27 percentage points). Furthermore, women entrepreneurs increased their feelings of agency, with marked improvements in regards to the ability to translate needs and aspirations into actionable goals, confidence in obtaining outcomes that are important to them, and belief in their ability to positively influence people and situations. These results support the importance of the outcome itself and the positive effects incubation can have on women entrepreneurs’ confidence and agency.
- The drop in motivation to become an entrepreneur can probably be attributed to the fact that the entrepreneurs have more knowledge and a more realistic picture of what it takes to become an entrepreneur and put their ideas into practice at the end of the incubation experience than at the start.

BUSINESS AND IMPACT SKILLS

Women entrepreneurs were asked to rate their business and impact skills at the beginning and at the end of the programme.



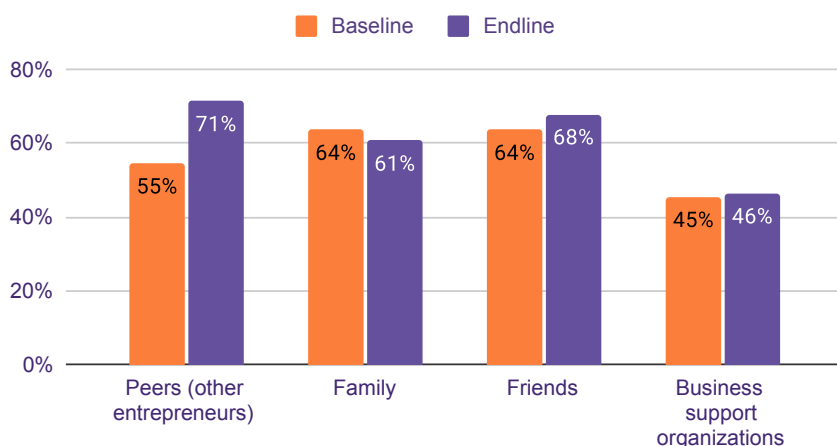
Entrepreneurs increased on a broad set of skills. The incubation programmes in particular helped women entrepreneurs expand their skills in numerous areas, most notably pitching (42 percentage point growth), product/service development and prototyping (27), operations (24), negotiation skills (23), and product market fit (20).

Conclusions and Recommendations

- The soft skills that were identified as the most relevant for women entrepreneurs to increase were negotiation skills, networking skills, and pitching skills. Pitching skills were the skills women entrepreneurs increased the most, and they also showed solid increases for negotiation and networking skills.
- For hard skills, technology and financial analysis and management were proposed as the most relevant skills for women entrepreneurs to improve on. In line with this, financial management, investment readiness, and accounting skills were the skills women entrepreneurs rated the most important at the beginning of the programme. Women entrepreneurs were able to increase their finance, investment readiness, and technology skills to some extent in the course of the programmes.
- In conclusion, it is recommended for incubation programmes to support women entrepreneurs in particular with pitching, negotiation, and networking skills and focus on financial literacy, financial independence, and financial strategy and management.

INCREASE IN SUPPORT

Participation in incubation programmes had little impact on the support received from friends, family, or business support organisations.



% of respondents that feel supported or highly supported by:

Participation in an incubator did give women entrepreneurs access to a wider network of peers and it did have an impact on the support entrepreneurs receive from peers. Entrepreneurs reported receiving an average of 4 hours of peer support per month and 76% agreed that the time and support provided to others comes back to them over time. 86% of entrepreneurs agreed that engaging in a community of peers strengthened their own entrepreneurial motivation, highlighting the importance of peer connections in entrepreneurship.

“Make sure to exchange your experience with others, ensure community and conversation, especially with other female entrepreneurs. Be brave, try out things and get in touch with other women. Our great strength as women is that we support each other.”

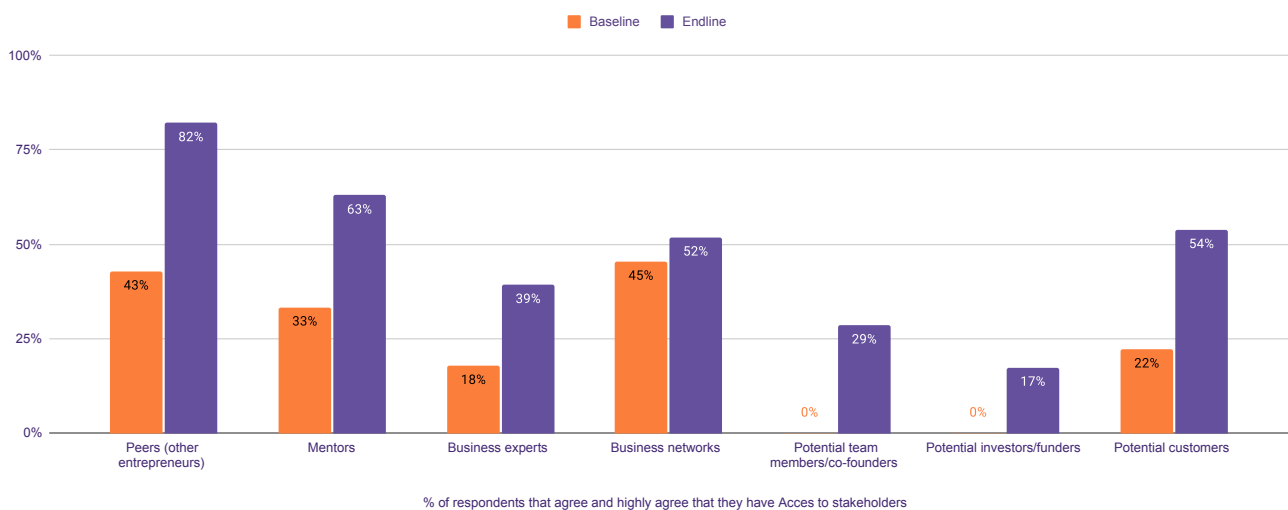
Participant
New Roots Programme
by Impact Hub Munich

Conclusions and Recommendations

- One of the desired outcomes for women entrepreneurs was an increase in social support for the entrepreneur from peers, family and friends, and other business networks. However, participation in incubation programmes had little impact on the support received from friends, family, or business support organisations.
- The one area that incubation programmes did have an effect on was the support received from peers. Entrepreneurs significantly increased their access to a wider network of peers through the programmes, received more peer support, and valued those peer connections. Incubators should pay attention to fostering a strong peer community within their cohorts of entrepreneurs and build connections and opportunities for collaboration between entrepreneurs.
- Apart from increased support from others, incubators themselves can put structures in place to better support the participation of women entrepreneurs. This is particularly relevant for women entrepreneurs who also have care responsibilities, especially mothers of young children. Providing childcare during the programme is a great way and just one example of how incubators can better support women in their entrepreneurial endeavours.

ACCESS TO NETWORKS

Access to networks is an important element of the incubation experience for entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs were able to expand their networks as a result of the pilot programmes and their satisfaction with their access to key stakeholders improved.



Satisfaction increased across all actors and the most for access to peers (39 percentage points), potential customers (32 points), mentors (30 points), and potential team members (29 points). Participants on average made 7 new valuable connections due to the programme and developed on average one new business partnership in the course of the programme.

“My most important takeaway is that even if you are an entrepreneur who works alone, it's really important to talk to people and network because you never know who can provide a resource, a contact or simply guidance.”

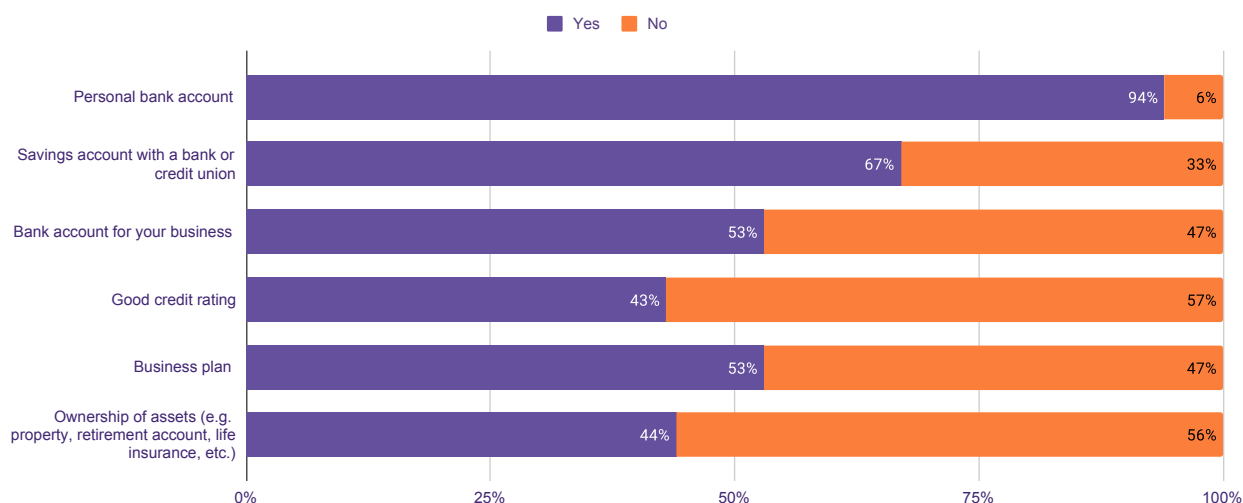
Participant
New Roots Programme
by Impact Hub Munich

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Increased access to relevant business networks, mentors, and experts and networking opportunities is relevant for any entrepreneur, but particularly to entrepreneurs from underrepresented groups such as women.
- Women entrepreneurs were able to expand their networks as a result of the pilot programmes and their satisfaction with their access to key stakeholders improved, especially in terms of access to investors, customers, peers, mentors and business experts.
- Incubators (as well as other actors in the entrepreneurial ecosystem) should pay particular attention to helping women entrepreneurs expand their networks and facilitating connections to potential investors, mentors, and partners.

ACCESS TO FINANCE

In line with the outcome areas, women entrepreneurs were asked about their ownership and power over financial assets, which often are a prerequisite for accessing finance. Among the participants, 94% had ownership over a personal bank account, 67% had a savings account, and 44% ownership of assets such as real estate or retirement accounts. Half of participants already had a bank account for their business and a business plan in place. 40% of women entrepreneurs indicated a good credit rating.



In line with the desired outcomes, the areas where women entrepreneurs sought support the most were financial management, investment readiness, and accounting. Access to finance was mentioned as a key need by the entrepreneurs that provided data: 72% (13 entrepreneurs) of them indicated that they wanted to raise funds for their idea or startup in the course of the programme. Out of the women entrepreneurs who wanted to raise funds, a little less than half of them (6 entrepreneurs, 46%) succeeded in obtaining investment in the course of the programme.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Access to finance is a key challenge for all entrepreneurs and the gender gap in finance makes it even harder for women entrepreneurs to access finance. Apart from working to improve financial skills of women entrepreneurs, incubators should also pay attention on how to reduce gender bias in networking events and demo days that bring entrepreneurs and potential funders and partners together, and how these types of events can be organised to be more inclusive of women entrepreneurs.
- The investment community needs to explore its own biases in investment decisions. In addition, opportunities for training of women entrepreneurs in particular, in financial management and investment readiness should be pursued.
- Increasing financial literacy, financial independence, and financial management for women can also be areas of interest and intervention for policy makers in the entrepreneurship space and in general.

By the end of the pilots, 89% of entrepreneurs were committed to keep working on their ventures after the programme in a full time or part time capacity.



Youth entrepreneurs

Barriers to entrepreneurship for women youth

For the purposes of the Better Incubation programme, the CoP defined youth as entrepreneurs between the ages of 18 and 35 years old.

There are several challenges for young people to access and succeed in entrepreneurship. The rise in youth unemployment and the increases in temporary, part-time and non-standard working arrangements could leverage youth interest in self-employment and entrepreneurship. However, the deterioration of working conditions for European young professionals directly provokes youth income instability, which can delay major decisions such as starting a business or resources-ownership.

Despite the “startup hype”, entrepreneurship might not be seen as an attractive career path or way to earn income by young people (and by society overall). There might be little awareness about entrepreneurship and few tangible role models from the youth community, which can result in a lack of interest, motivation, and encouragement.

Furthermore, young people face systemic barriers due to a lack of enabling policy, regulatory and institutional environments. Specifically, these challenges can include barriers for youth entrepreneurship like “high registration costs for businesses, cumbersome administrative procedures, obstructive taxation and legal systems, discriminatory policies and practices”.

These issues get further compounded by overall weak entrepreneurial environments for youth. There is a lack of connections and networks in terms of business support, potential customers and investors. Furthermore, many young people might have limited entrepreneurial skills and there is a lack of entrepreneurship education.

This barrier impedes young entrepreneurs from being “fit for purpose” and establishing their own businesses, gaining access to technology, developing entrepreneurial skills and pursuing their education. “Education and training programmes targeted at youth generally do not do enough to nurture entrepreneurial attitudes and skills” and even if they do have the necessary skills, there can be negative misconceptions about young people’s skills from others such as partners or investors, especially when applying intersectional lenses (for example, disadvantaged groups such as young people with disabilities).

Also, lack of access to finance is also a key barrier for young entrepreneurs, characterised by minimum

capital requirement, the lack of collateral, higher risk profile and consequent reluctance of financial institutions to lend money. Especially “in European countries, lack of financial support from the private sector has been found to be a significant obstacle for young entrepreneurial individuals”.

It has to be noted that issues of intersectionality play a highly important role in youth entrepreneurship. For example, youth from marginalised backgrounds, with lower levels of education, or with adverse childhood experiences will face much higher barriers to entrepreneurship than youth from more privileged backgrounds. “Youth” - as many of the other target groups as well - can thus not be seen as a homogenous target group, but rather as a summary term within which a lot of different needs and barriers exist.

Outcomes for youth entrepreneurs and best practices

When helping young people incubate their business ideas, incubators should pay attention to the specific barriers that young people face in accessing and succeeding in entrepreneurship. In order to do so, incubators need to also consider issues of intersectionality, i.e. additional factors that will influence the entrepreneurs' specific challenges and needs. Overall, in order to be inclusive of young entrepreneurs, incubators should work towards the following outcomes:

- Increase in awareness of entrepreneurship/self-employment as a career path
- Increase in social support for the entrepreneur (peers, family, support organisations, etc)
- Increase in motivation to become an entrepreneur
- Improved access to finance and financial services:
 - Financial literacy and personal financial planning (to address lack of credit, little savings, collateral, etc)
 - Access to capital:
 - How to prepare for meetings with lenders, pitch to investors, etc
 - How to access alternative forms of finance (e.g. crowdfunding)
- Increase in skills (entrepreneurship, business planning and modelling, employability, soft skills)
- Increase in networks (peers, team, mentors and advisors) and networking opportunities
- Improved access to markets and value chains
- Increased confidence

To contribute to these outcomes, incubators can draw on a set of best practices from programme design, to recruitment and selection, and programme delivery. The Youth CoP consisted of pilots run by 4 incubators in 4 countries: United Kingdom, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Spain. The pilots reached a quite diverse group of young people across the continent.

Impact Hub Budapest ran a programme for young people who had mostly grown up in the foster care system. They worked closely with partner organisations and provided training and mentoring sessions to the participants. Mentorship was the most important part of the programme because participants

needed personal attention the most. Mentors were sourced from the local Impact Hub network and were selected to represent differences in gender, age and professional backgrounds and matched according to their experience and the profile of the business idea. At the end participants presented a business model canvas for their business ideas and finalists received some financial support.

The New Roots programme by Impact Hub Kings Cross supported underserved entrepreneurs from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds based within two boroughs local to the Impact Hub. The programme prioritised young entrepreneurs and piloted a number of new initiatives to support them, including participant outreach and selection, facilitating access to capital through providing support with grant applications, effective mentor matching, and usage of the business model canvas to capture participants' business ideas in an easy and accessible way.

EU|BIC Ruse Chamber of Commerce and Industry offered a small-scale mentoring programme, "Be the Change", for young people who were still in education. 5 young entrepreneurs took part in the programme (4 high-school students and one university student). The programme supported 2 innovative business ideas and included a series of mentoring sessions during which each of the ideas was reviewed, improved and further developed by the entrepreneurs under the supervision and support of an expert. Young entrepreneurs were taught how to use tools like a value proposition canvas, social business model canvas, validation boards and others and included a pitching session at the end of the programme during which the young entrepreneurs presented their business ideas to a panel of experts.

EU|BIC FUNDECY-PCTEX put a special focus on youth who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET). The pilot included workshops to promote social entrepreneurship and the improvement of employability and entrepreneurship skills in youth, between 18-30 years old, mainly from rural areas. Participants selected challenges in their environment and then worked on the identification of possible solutions to address them through entrepreneurship. Participants assumed the role of an entrepreneur, defining a business idea and the incorporation of products and services. The programme provided intensive support and mentoring to participants.

Best practices in incubating and accelerating youth entrepreneurs are summarised in the Better Incubation Collection of Best Practices in Inclusive Entrepreneurship Programmes and the Better Incubation Toolkit. The following selected best practices were tested by the pilots and proved to be particularly effective for incubating youth entrepreneurs.

Use of outreach partners for the scouting of potential young entrepreneurs

Most of the pilots identified and secured partner organisations for outreach and promotion of the programme. These can be schools or universities, or where applicable, organisations dedicated to supporting marginalised young people.

"We were working closely with one organisation, the Világszép Foundation. They are working with children and youth from state care and foster care. Five of our seven participants were coming from their programme and network. We discussed together who could be a good fit to the programme and who could learn and benefit from it. Then we reached out to everybody in person and discussed the details with them. We had been in touch during the programme and asking help if there were drop outs or any kind of problems. They were also coming to see the presentations in the end. It was essential to have a partner who already built trust with this group, without them it would have been much harder to realise this programme."

Participant
New Roots Programme
by Impact Hub Munich

Dedicated support through mentoring

Mentoring stood out as the most important ingredient for young people in accessing entrepreneurship as it enabled individual guidance and gave participants role models that they could follow. Especially for marginalised young people, like the cohort in Budapest, this was a very important aspect. Here, the matchmaking process of the Impact Hub team was an important success factor. In Impact Hub King's Cross, the connections and opportunities provided by the mentors stood out, as well as the getting the foundation of their businesses ready with their learning from the workshops.

"Mentor outreach and selection was highly tailored to ensure we had a pool of experts with similar backgrounds and profiles to the participants themselves. To ensure a good mentor-mentee fit, we piloted a new speed dating mechanism. This approach proved highly successful since the participants had the opportunity to quickly meet 3-5 potential mentors before selecting the ones they think would be the best fit. Not only did this empower the young entrepreneurs, but by ensuring there was a good rapport, the participants were much less likely to disengage from the mentoring activities."

Impact Hub King's Cross

"It was the most important part of the programme because our participants needed the personal attention the most. We invited our mentors from our network, they used to be mentors at previous programmes of the Impact Hub. We really wanted to select mentors from different gender, age and professional backgrounds and tried to match them to the participants according to the profile of the business idea and the experience of the mentors. At the closing sessions, the mentors talked a lot about the fact that it was rather a life coaching than a business mentoring process and it was the first time for many of them to meet someone who grew up in childcare / foster care and it really touched them and the way of thinking about their own life."

Impact Hub Budapest

Facilitating connections and building networks

In addition to mentorship, pilots helped participants build networks of support by creating opportunities for networking and engagement that the young participants would not have access to otherwise.

"To count on a support network is crucial to young people not in education, employment, or training and to support them in the long term. We introduced some ideas obtained from the best practices, such as offering access to external events and networking opportunities. We also put them in contact with successful entrepreneurs, and also introduced the digital tool Discord, to create a community of young entrepreneurs."

Impact Hub King's Cross

Use of entrepreneurial tools such as the Business Model Canvas

Impact Hub King's Cross, Budapest, and RCCI used the business model canvas as a simple tool to guide participants in their learning and business development process.

"We used the Business Model Canvas. The usage of simple tools and examples makes the process of incubation and mentoring much easier and smooth."

EU|BIC Ruse CCI

"The Business Model Canvas provided participating entrepreneurs a perfect medium to capture their learnings and thoughts in an easy and accessible way. They could also then use this resource to quickly bring mentors and experts up to speed about their idea."

Impact Hub King's Cross

A challenge for all the programmes was the timing: making sure the participants would stay engaged with the programme throughout the 3-6 months period. COVID-19 also made engagement more difficult in locations that needed to offer the programme virtually.

Results of the Better Incubation programme

Baseline data was collected from 17 young entrepreneurs, and endline data from 23 participants. Some data points are only available for 11 young entrepreneurs from the pilots in Impact Hub King's Cross, Budapest, EU|BIC Ruse CCI.

The majority of respondents (53%) was between 18 and 24 years old, 12% were younger than 18, and 35% were between 25 and 34 years old.

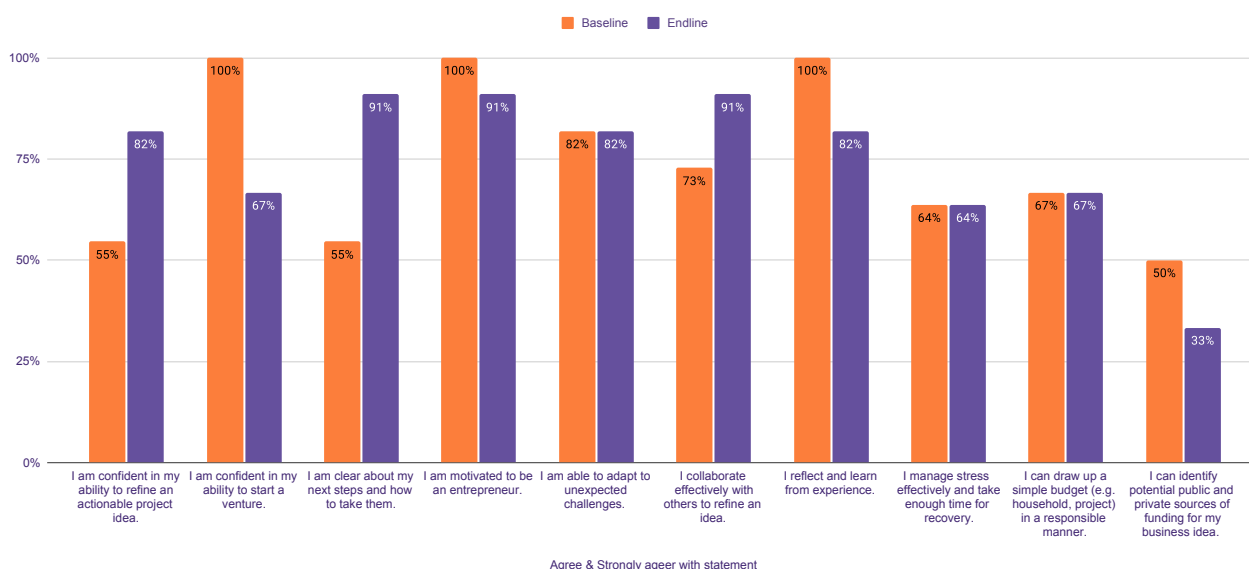
Participants were either currently students (60%) or working (40%) at the start of the programme. Participants' primary motivation for participating in a programme was to learn about entrepreneurship and how to start a venture. Skills improvement in order to find a better job in the future was also a key motivation for some of the participants. And lastly, some participants mentioned exploring ways to increase their income from self-employment or being a freelancer as a motivation for participation.

The pilots offered programmes at the early stage of the entrepreneurial spectrum. 80% of participants self-identified being at idea stage and 20% at startup stage.

70% of participants want to create social or environmental impact with their venture idea, 30% had no such ambitions or did not know yet. Participants were most interested in creating a positive impact on issues such as health and wellbeing, sustainable production and consumption, environmental sustainability, and clean energy.

ENTREPRENEURIAL CULTURE

The pilots assessed several dimensions of leadership skills and entrepreneurial capabilities. A mixed picture emerges for the youth pilots.



Participants report an improvement in terms of clarity of next steps (36 points), confidence in their ability to refine a project idea (27 points), and collaboration with others to refine ideas (18 points).

“The programme was a complete success, as it became clear what I was going to do, and also what the next step would be.”

Impact Hub King's Cross

However, participants report a decrease in their confidence to start a venture (23 points), their ability to reflect and learn from experience (18), their ability to identify potential funding sources for their business idea (17 points), and in their motivation to become an entrepreneur (9 points).

Conclusions and Recommendations

- The desired outcomes defined under entrepreneurial culture were an increase in awareness of entrepreneurship or self-employment as a career path, an increase in confidence, and an increase in motivation to become an entrepreneur. As outlined under the barriers to entrepreneurship, low awareness of entrepreneurship as a career path, few role models, and lack of motivation can result in a lack of interest and uptake of entrepreneurship among young people.
- The results of the pilots paint a mixed picture. On the one hand, participants reported increases in confidence in their abilities to successfully refine a project idea, increased clarity of next steps, and improvements in their ability to collaborate with others. On the other hand, the results show a decrease in participants' confidence to start a venture, their ability to identify funding, and most notably, their motivation to become an entrepreneur. A possible explanation is that as young people learn about what it actually takes to start a venture, including the complexities of fundraising and other barriers, they might get a more realistic view of entrepreneurship and their confidence and motivation might consequently decrease.

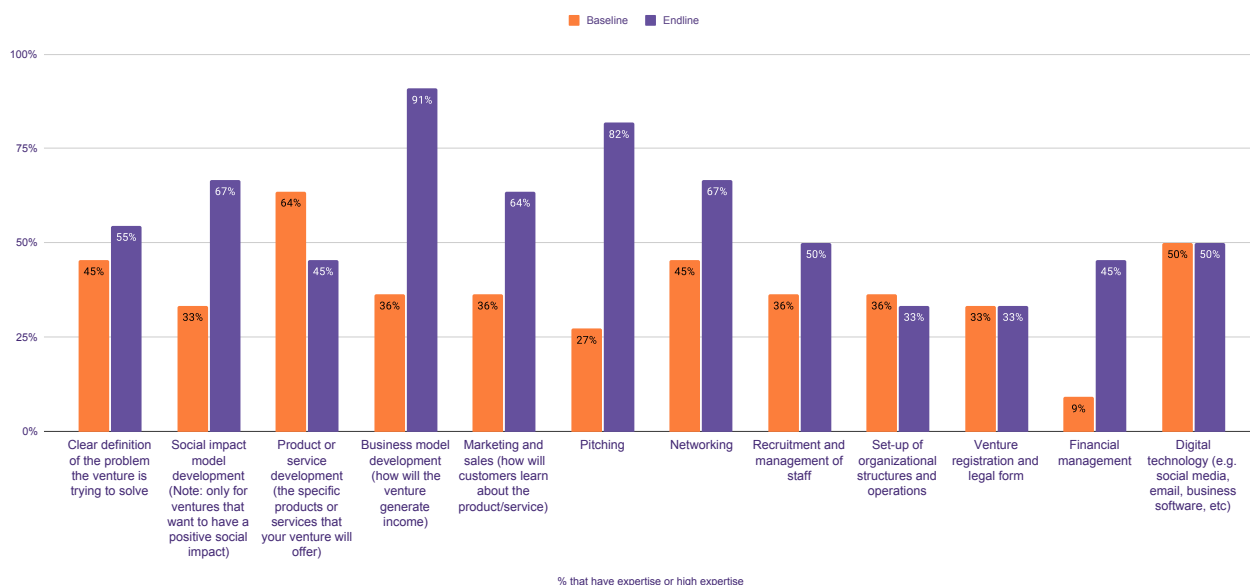
→ Incubators should take these learnings into account when designing programmes for young people. Especially at the very early stage and/or when working with marginalised youth, programmes might consider focusing on increasing confidence and skills for entrepreneurship in general before working on the development and realisation of specific business ideas. The example of one of the pilots working with youth not in education, employment, or training (NEET) shows that especially for vulnerable young people, challenges such as confidence, skills, and general employability need to be addressed just as much as help in starting a business.

“The initial programme included a more specific objective, that was the development of a social business project. However, we had to focus on other fields. In a more specific way, in employability and entrepreneurship skills, to increase self-confidence, and other soft skills. A previous work in those aspects is needed, and then, whether it is feasible, work on the entrepreneurial idea.”

FUNDECY-PCTEX

BUSINESS AND IMPACT SKILLS

Young entrepreneurs were able to increase their business and impact skills thanks to their participation in the pilots.



The areas with the biggest increase in skills were pitching and business model development (both increased by 55 percentage points), followed by financial management (36 points), social impact model development (33 points), marketing and sales (27 points), and networking (21 points).

“My goal was to acquire knowledge and obtain financial support. I managed to achieve both. The mentoring was very helpful.”

Participant
Impact Hub Budapest

“My goal was to further develop my business idea and learn more about the steps to success. Thanks to the programme, I was able to improve my idea and be more confident in its presentation.”

Participant
EU| BIC Ruse CCI

Participants also reported a decrease for certain skills between the baseline and the endline. The areas with a decrease were product and service development (-18 points) and set up of first organisational structures (3 points). While it is not clear why a decrease happened, one possible explanation is that participants overestimated their level of skills at the start of the programme and revised their self-assessment by the end.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- The skills that were identified as the most relevant for young entrepreneurs were entrepreneurial skills such as business planning and modelling, and soft skills and skills for employability.
- Participants were able to increase entrepreneurial hard skills such as business model development, social impact model development, and financial skills. They also reported an increase in soft skills such as pitching and networking. This is also supported by the feedback of the pilots themselves.

“The business proficiency of the participants was much improved as a result of their engagement in New Roots and key workshop activities. The programme also provided them with a peer network in which they could discuss the development of their ideas and businesses.”

Impact Hub King's Cross

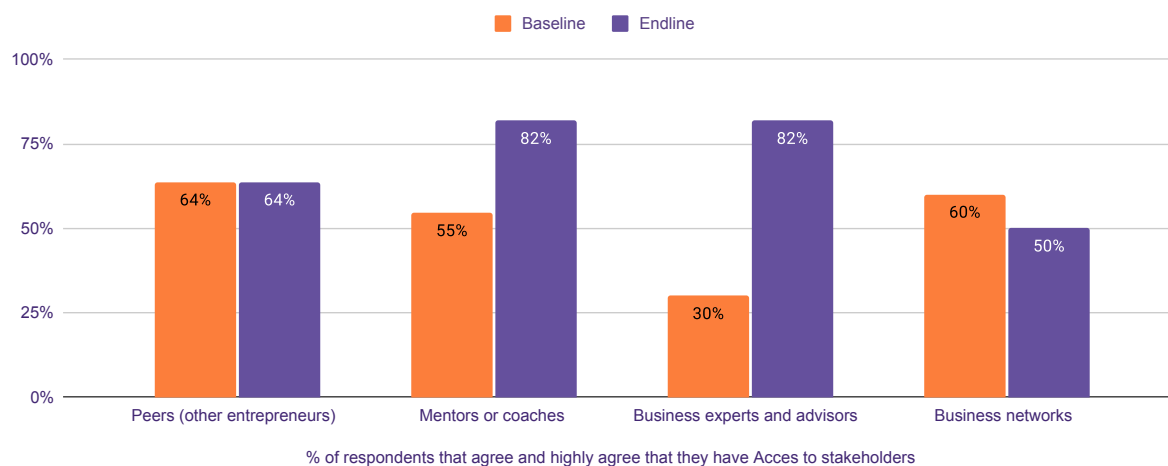
“For this short period of time, we managed to achieve improvement of participants' entrepreneurial skills and competencies. We also gave them space for self-reflection and evaluation of their strong and weak sides and helped them identify the areas they need to work on more, both in terms of personal and business model development.”

Participant
EU| BIC Ruse CCI

- The measurement did not assess further soft skills or skills for employability that might precede entrepreneurial skills.

ACCESS TO NETWORKS

Young entrepreneurs indicated a strong increase in satisfaction with their access to business experts and advisors and mentors and coaches. Participants on average made 5 new valuable connections due to the programme and developed on average two new partnerships in the course of the programme. They indicated the same level of satisfaction at the beginning and at the end of their programmes with their access to peers, and reported a slight decrease in satisfaction with their access to business networks.



Conclusions and Recommendations

- Increased access to relevant business networks, mentors, and experts and networking opportunities is relevant for any entrepreneur, but particularly important to entrepreneurs from underrepresented groups such as youth entrepreneurs.
- Young entrepreneurs were able to expand their networks, in particular in regards to business experts and advisors, and mentors and coaches. With the help of the pilots, participants were able to access more formal business support and networking opportunities that they would not have had otherwise.

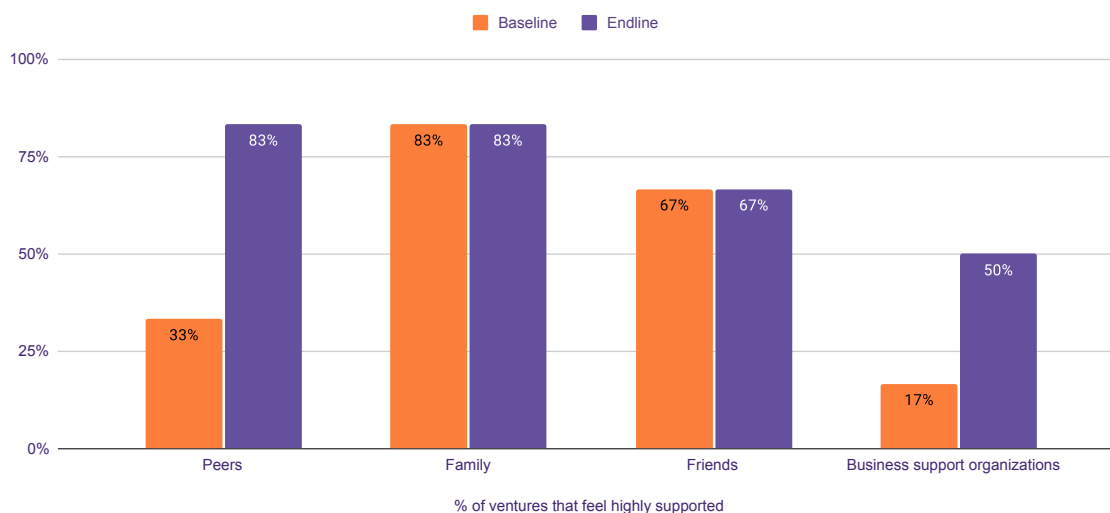
“We created pitching opportunities that wouldn't be available for participants otherwise and provided direct contact with successful entrepreneurs. Giving feedback and validation to a business idea is very crucial and young people need a lot of it in order to build resilience and confidence in their skills. Meeting successful peers is a great motivator and reduces the fear of failure”

EU| BIC Ruse CCI

- Incubators can have a significant positive impact by helping young entrepreneurs access support and expand their network of mentors, experts, and seasoned entrepreneurs.

INCREASE IN SUPPORT

Similar to other groups, youth entrepreneurs indicated a strong increase in support by peers (50 percentage points) and also from business support organisations (33 percentage points). The pilots had no effect on the level of supportiveness young entrepreneurs receive from friends and family.



Entrepreneurs reported receiving an average of 11 hours of peer support per month and 56% agreed that the time and support provided to others comes back to them over time and 61% that engaging in a community of peers strengthened their own entrepreneurial motivation.

“The face-to-face sessions were interesting because of the energy shared with other entrepreneurs.”

Participant EU|BIC FUNDECY-PCTEX

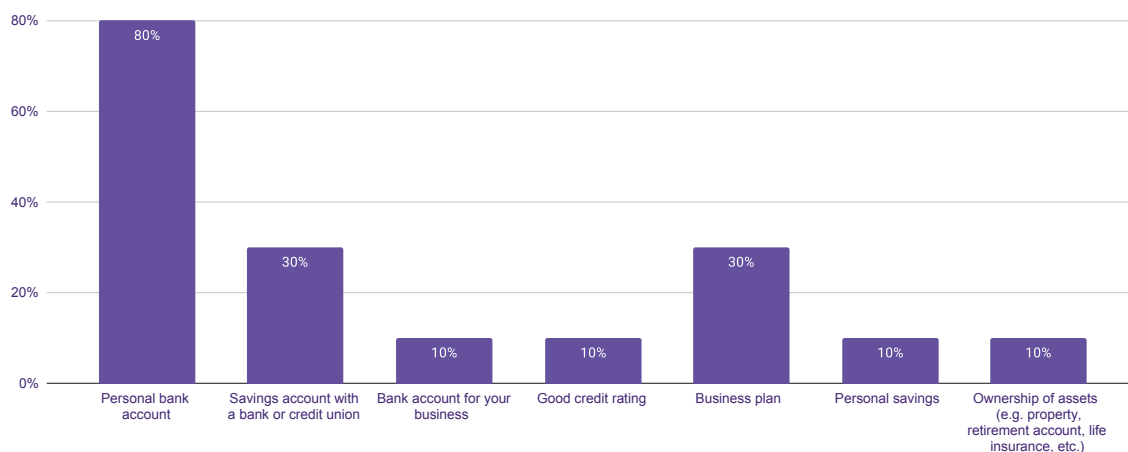
Conclusions and Recommendations

- Similar to other groups, youth entrepreneurs indicated a strong increase in the support by peers. Entrepreneurs significantly increased their access to a wider network of peers through the programmes, received more peer support, and valued those peer connections.
- Incubators should focus on fostering a strong peer community within their cohorts of entrepreneurs and build connections and opportunities for collaboration between entrepreneurs.
- Youth participants also indicated an increase in support from business support organisations.
- Participation in incubation programmes had little impact on the support received from friends and family. In general, given the young age of the participants, incubators might still want to consider the systems of support and relationships (parents, teachers, coaches, etc.) for young entrepreneurs more than for other target groups and help participants navigate their support system when it comes to entrepreneurship

ACCESS TO FINANCE

Access to finance was overall not a prominent issue among youth entrepreneurs. From the data available the vast majority of entrepreneurs were not looking to raise funds in the course of the programme. Nevertheless, individual entrepreneurs were able to access funding for their venture in the course of the programme.

In line with the outcome areas, young entrepreneurs were asked about their ownership and power over financial assets, which often are a prerequisite for accessing finance. Among the participants, 80% had ownership over a personal bank account, but only 30% had a savings account and 10% reported having actual personal savings or ownership of assets. These results are not surprising given the young age of the entrepreneurs. Furthermore, as most participants were at the idea stage, only 10% had a business account and 30% had a business plan in place before the programme.



Conclusions and Recommendations

- From the data available the vast majority of participants were not planning to raise funds in the course of the programme. This might on the one hand be explained by the fact that 80% of respondents were at the idea stage when joining the programme. On the other hand, the fact that many participants had little business or financial skills and low confidence could partly also result in a lack of confidence in identifying and applying for funding.
- Even if participants did not prioritise raising funds, this might not mean that they could not benefit from financial support and funding at the early stage of their venture development.

“The programme prioritised young entrepreneurs and piloted a number of new initiatives to support them, including delivering a workshop around Grant Funding and how to optimally apply for grants and following up with 1:1 support and feedback on test grant applications. This intervention was introduced after discovering that the young participants lacked the confidence and resources to secure the early stage funding they needed to launch their businesses.”

Participant, EU|BIC FUNDECY-PCTEX

- Increasing overall financial literacy, acumen, and confidence, educating young people about different sources of funding, both traditional and alternative (e.g. crowdfunding), and hands-on training on how to access funding should be included in youth incubation programmes.

At the end of the pilots, two thirds of participants indicated that they want to continue working on their venture in a full- or part-time capacity, one third of participants were not yet clear about whether they would continue working on their business idea.



Senior entrepreneurs

Barriers to entrepreneurship for seniors

For the purposes of the Better Incubation programme, the CoP generally defined seniors as entrepreneurs at the age of 50 and above.

Seniors face several challenges when engaging in entrepreneurship. Low levels of retirement savings might be a reason why seniors might want to engage in entrepreneurship but are also a barrier as they do not provide the necessary flexibility and security for starting a business that especially seniors might need. In countries where bureaucratic processes in the initial startup phase take a long time, seniors might be discouraged to engage in entrepreneurship as time is a very valuable resource for this group of entrepreneurs.

Age discriminatory practices that exist in employment likely extend to entrepreneurship. Furthermore, senior entrepreneurs are likely to have outdated business networks, and are likely to face some difficulties in mastering digital tools and some might tend to be at odds with technological innovations.

Lastly, seniors' engagement in entrepreneurship might be hampered by challenges such as social isolation and anxiety, caused by issues related to perceived health, generativity, fear (of death, of failing, of uncertainty, of ensuring continuity), and social exclusion. Deteriorating health and, especially for women, care responsibilities for a partner, pose further barriers for seniors to engage in entrepreneurship.

Outcomes for senior entrepreneurs and best practices

The following outcomes have been identified as relevant for senior entrepreneurs' success, and incubators and accelerators can have an influence on them:

- Increase in personal income and financial stability
- Increase in skills:
 - Technical skills (e.g. entrepreneurship and business skills)

- Soft/transversal skills (e.g. diversity and inclusion)
 - Improved digital literacy and digital skills
- Improved social capital and increase in access to relevant business networks, mentors, and other support organisations
- Increased knowledge of benefits and risks of self-employment/entrepreneurship for seniors
- Improved social support and social integration for the entrepreneur
- Increased confidence
- Increased feelings of autonomy, independence, and agency

To contribute to these outcomes, incubators can draw on a set of best practices from programme design, to recruitment and selection, and programme delivery. The following best practices were implemented by the pilots in the CoP for senior entrepreneurs. The Senior CoP consisted of pilots run by 4 incubators in 2 countries: EU|BIC CEEIARAGON and Impact Hub Madrid in Spain, and Impact Hub Lisbon and EU|BIC IPN Incubadora in Portugal.

Age discriminatory practices that exist in employment likely extend to entrepreneurship. Furthermore, senior entrepreneurs are likely to have outdated business networks, and are likely to face some difficulties in mastering digital tools and some might tend to be at odds with technological innovations.

Lastly, seniors' engagement in entrepreneurship might be hampered by challenges such as social isolation and anxiety, caused by issues related to perceived health, generativity, fear (of death, of failing, of uncertainty, of ensuring continuity), and social exclusion. Deteriorating health and, especially for women, care responsibilities for a partner, pose further barriers for seniors to engage in entrepreneurship.

EU|BIC CEEIARAGON and Impact Hub Madrid focused on later stage entrepreneurs, with EU|BIC CEEIARAGON supporting 3 senior entrepreneurs in their internationalisation process and Impact Hub Madrid supporting 3 female entrepreneurs over 45 years in accelerating their business. The programmes in Portugal focused on supporting early-stage entrepreneurs through incubation services.

EU|BIC CEEIARAGON supported entrepreneurs in internationalising through personalised business coaching sessions and training, networking opportunities, and focused on creating visibility for their entrepreneurs in media. Impact Hub Madrid supports, empowers and makes visible senior talent in the field of entrepreneurship through their programme, Silver Lab. Over 3 months, participants worked with specialised mentors in different business areas on their business models. In addition, spaces for interaction with other key entrepreneurs in the ecosystem were created, and participants had access to space and a membership at Impact Hub.

EU|BIC IPN Incubadora's programme supported 25 entrepreneurs between 50 and 74 years with an eight-week entrepreneurship capacity building programme, based on online training and mentoring, and an in-person kick-off and demo day. Impact Hub Lisbon's programme trained eight senior entrepreneurs of which five were selected to pitch their ideas in a Demo-Day. Senior entrepreneurs were integrated in an existing capacity building programme, which consisted in 3 months of in-person training plus 4 months of individual mentoring.

Best practices in incubating and accelerating senior entrepreneurs are summarised in the Better Incubation Collection of Best Practices in Inclusive Entrepreneurship Programmes and the Better Incubation Toolkit. The following selected best practices were tested by the pilots and proved to be particularly effective for incubating senior entrepreneurs.

Active scouting of senior entrepreneurs

Pilots put a lot of thought into the promotion of the programmes to senior entrepreneurs and into selection. Pilots collaborated with outreach partners and actively scouted and invited senior entrepreneurs to apply.

“We scouted for senior participants in three ways: 1) by reaching out to social entities/ government agencies who work with seniors in Lisbon, 2) by contacting participants 50+ from former programmes ran by Impact Hub Lisbon; 3) by encouraging the seniors we had already selected to participate to invite friends or people they knew would benefit from this programme.”

Impact Hub Lisbon

Some pilots ran a targeted communication campaign for recruitment that focused on creating visibility for senior entrepreneurs, and included senior entrepreneurs in the selection process.

“We ran a communication campaign with images of senior entrepreneurs, in Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, radio, traditional press and digital press. For the selection process we did interviews by a selection committee that included seniors.”

EU|BIC CEEIARAGON

Dedicated support through mentoring and coaching

Another aspect that stood out for this group of pilots was the importance of 1-on-1 support in the form of coaching or mentoring.

“The programme included individualised mentoring from our staff: mentors and participants were matched according to the business idea and the mentor expertise; mentors gave weekly support and guidance during a minimum of 8 weeks.”

EU|BIC IPN Incubadora

In some cases, participants were initially resistant to the idea of getting external advice for their business planning, but this was soon overcome as the entrepreneurs started seeing results from putting their business plan onto paper.

“The coaching was not welcomed in the beginning, it was sometimes difficult to convey the importance of establishing a methodology and organising the business development process, but in the end, it was appreciated.”

EU|BIC CEEIARAGON

Facilitating connections and building networks

Helping senior entrepreneurs grow their networks was another vital component of the pilots.

“Networking was valued very much by the entrepreneurs and used extensively with both public entities and institutions and private businesses. 12 networking meetings were held with public entities, R&D institutes, startups and two group meetings.”

EU|BIC CEEIARAGON

Beyond business networking, senior entrepreneurs were also able to build a network of peers and supportive experts and advisors.

“The programme welcomed people of very different ages, from 31 to 62, which allowed, throughout the entire programme, a lot of knowledge sharing and cross-generation support. The facilitators were carefully chosen so that they could build a cohesive group spirit and this was also a goal that we managed to reach. Friendships were created and the spirit of mutual help was felt from the beginning until the end of the training. The creation of the WhatsApp group also helped and it became a very active group, where participants were sharing a little of their life and achievements and also asking for help to carry out some of the exercises that were required in the classes.”

EU|BIC IPN Incubadora

“We could see a great sense of community building between them. After the implementation of the programme, the majority of the group demonstrated a greater sense of resilience and self-confidence in themselves and, consequently, are more prepared to work on their projects.”

Impact Hub Lisbon

Flexibility in timing and logistics of the programme

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the programmes that were carried out already happened partially or fully online, which was challenging for some but not all senior entrepreneurs. Some members of this group have fewer digital literacy and / or comfort in using digital tools, so the usage of online tools and keeping up with the online sessions was demanding for many of them. The pilots clearly showed the importance of having in-person events, which strongly increase engagement of this target group.

“The fact that we had a face-to-face programme worked very well, especially after 2 atypical years, where most of us were isolated. From the beginning, we noticed how much the group needed to feel active again, especially socialising and exchanging ideas with new colleagues. In addition, we had to take into consideration the availability that the group had to attend the sessions and therefore we defined the times according to the needs of the group.”

Impact Hub Lisbon

“The main challenge was to keep the participants engaged during the 8-weeks of the programme duration, since the training and mentoring were all delivered online. To avoid demotivation and drop-outs we implemented once a week the so-called “office-hours” – one hour or more, Fridays before lunch, a synchronous group session on Zoom, not mandatory, but recommended, to promote engagement, clarify doubts, give feedback, share insights and overall connect and network between the participants and the project team.”

EU|BIC IPN Incubadora

Supporting the development of digital skills

The pilots did observe a lack of digital skills in some participants and found different solutions to deal with digital barriers. Impact Hub Madrid, for example, offered its senior participants access to interns, and several of the pilots offered in-depth workshops on digital marketing.

“We added a module on digital communication to our pre-existing programme structure and improved and adapted some dynamics that we wanted to bring to the 1st phase (online) to make the environment more inclusive.”

Impact Hub Lisbon

Results of the Better Incubation Programme

Baseline data was collected from 21 senior entrepreneurs, and endline data from 12 participants. Some data points are only available for 12 senior entrepreneurs from the pilots at Impact Hub Lisbon, Madrid, and EU|BIC CEEIARAGON.

Two thirds of respondents were between 50 and 59 years old and another 24% were between 60 and 64 years old. Consequently, only 5% (or 1 respondent) was retired. 48% were already running a business or self-employed, 10% were employed, and 29% were unemployed.

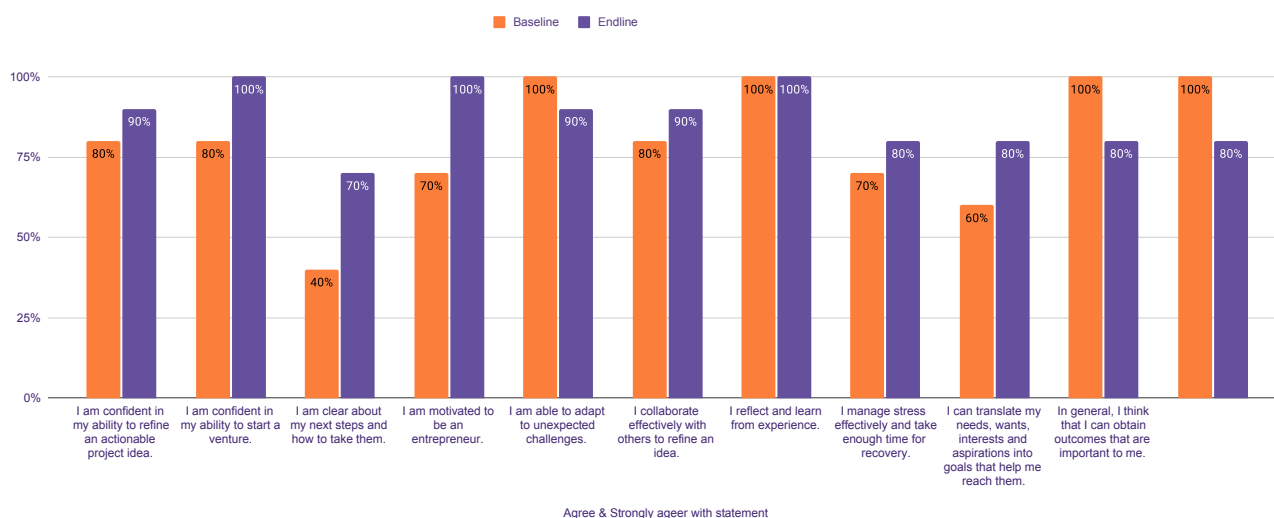
The group was predominantly female with 67% of respondents identifying as female. Education levels varied among participants with 43% listing a high school degree or vocational training as their highest level of completed education, and 48% listing a university degree.

Participants joined the pilots in order to get support in starting or growing their venture, find ways to increase their income and gain more financial stability, and to learn about entrepreneurship.

The group was very balanced in terms of entrepreneurial stage with 33% at idea stage, 24% at start-up stage, and 43% at growth stage. Overall, Impact Hub Lisbon and EU|BIC IPN Incubadora focused on early stage entrepreneurs, while Impact Hub Madrid and EU|BIC CEEIARAGON focused more on later stage entrepreneurs. 76% of respondents aim to create positive social or environmental impact with their business or initiative.

ENTREPRENEURIAL CULTURE

The pilots assessed several dimensions of leadership skills and entrepreneurial capabilities.



The areas with the biggest percentage point increase from the start to the end of the programmes were clarity about next steps and motivation to be an entrepreneur (both plus 30 percentage points), confidence in their ability to start a venture, and ability to translate needs, wants, interests and aspirations into actionable goals (both 20 percentage points).

“I entered the programme without really knowing what I wanted, like a deflated balloon and today I am full of ideas and determination and the desire to see the project expand and come to fruition.”

Entrepreneur
Impact Hub Lisbon

However, participants also reported a slight decrease in agreement in their ability to adapt to unexpected challenges and, more pronounced with a 20-percentage point drop, their belief that they can achieve outcomes that are important to them and their belief in their ability to influence people and situations for the better.

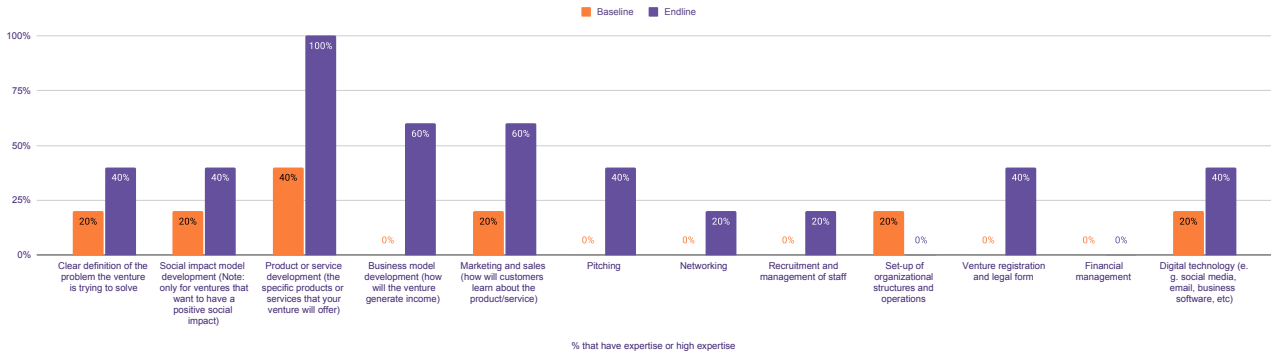
Conclusions and Recommendations

- The outcomes identified as relevant for senior entrepreneurs were an increase in confidence and increased feelings of autonomy, independence, and agency.
- The incubation pilots were successful in increasing confidence among senior entrepreneurs as demonstrated by improved clarity, motivation, and confidence.
- Incubation pilots also helped senior entrepreneurs increase their agency and ability to translate their desires into actionable goals.
- However, entrepreneurs also reported decreased agreement with their ability to adapt to unexpected challenges, their ability to achieve important outcomes, and their ability to influence people and situations. The reasons for these decreases are unclear and might require further exploration and attention by business support organisations.

BUSINESS AND IMPACT SKILLS

The CoP for senior entrepreneurs included programmes both at the early and later stages of entrepreneurship and skill assessments were adapted to the respective stage.

Senior entrepreneurs participating in early stage programmes were able to increase their skills in several areas.

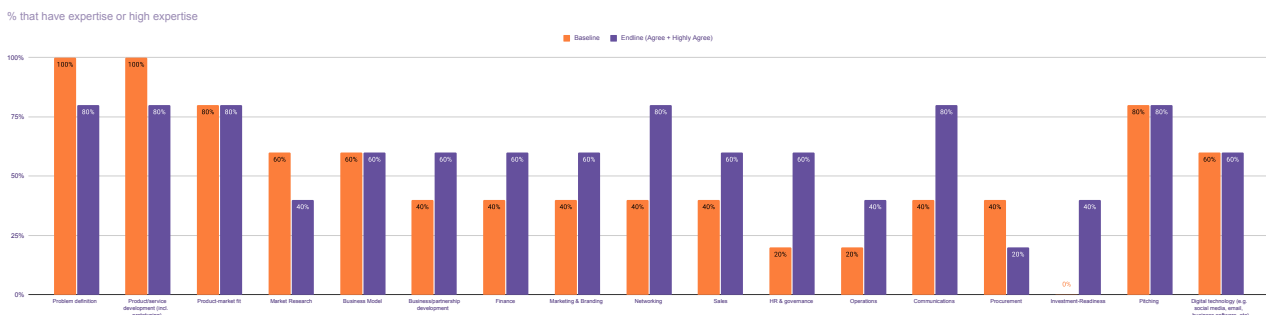


The areas with the biggest self-reported increase were business model development, product or service development, pitching, marketing and sales, and venture registration and legal form, but also other areas showed increases such as networking, HR, digital technology, problem definition, and social impact model development. Financial management skills stayed low and a decrease was reported on skills regarding setting up organisational structures.

“I have been an entrepreneur for 36 years, without any specific training, only with what I learned in practice, my goal was to bring online visibility to my venture, which I achieved with the knowledge and tools I acquired in the programme and that I already have in practice with the help of mentoring. Currently I already have clients who contact me through google maps, my Facebook page and others to whom I sent emails giving information about the material I have.”

**Entrepreneur,
Impact Hub Lisbon**

Entrepreneurs in the later stage programmes reported the largest increases for networking skills, HR and governance, communications, and investment readiness. They also increased their skills in finance, business development and partnerships, marketing and branding, sales, and operations.



“I wanted to have a better understanding of how ecommerce works and especially how different ecommerce tools can help me. I was also able to change my approach to different issues as patents and internationalisation and received support.”

Entrepreneur
Impact Hub Lisbon

Pitching, product/market fit, and digital skills stayed the same. In some areas, entrepreneurs reported a decrease in skills. These areas are most relevant in the early stages of entrepreneurship (problem definition, product/service development, market research).

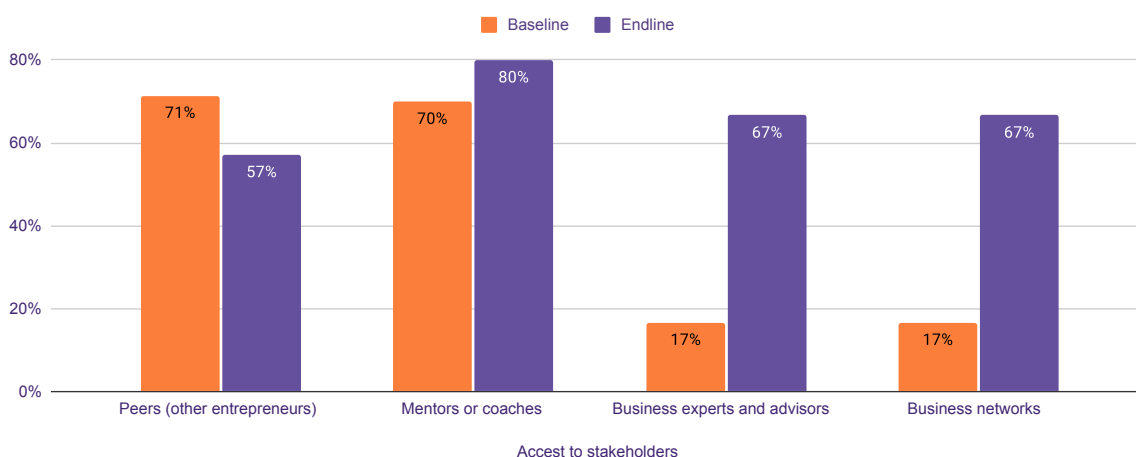
Data for impact skills (creating a theory of change, monitoring results, etc.) is only available from the baseline and for later stage entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs rated themselves as having no to little skills in those areas.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- The outcomes identified as relevant for senior entrepreneurs were an increase in both technical skills relating to entrepreneurship and business, soft or transversal skills, and digital skills.
- Early-stage entrepreneurs increased business and entrepreneurship skills such as business model development and product or service development, and soft skills such as pitching and networking. They were also able to increase their digital skills with the help of the pilots.
- Later stage entrepreneurs increased technical skills such as investment readiness and general business skills, and soft skills such as networking. The pilots did not have an effect on their pitching or digital skills, which might have been already quite advanced given the later stage of business development they were in. Impact management skills were low.
- Overall senior entrepreneurs are probably likely to benefit from stage-based skill building as much as other entrepreneurs. Senior entrepreneurs at the early stage might benefit more from digital skills training. All entrepreneurs can benefit from skill building in regards to impact measurement and management.

ACCESS TO NETWORKS

Senior entrepreneurs were, for the most part, able to expand their networks due to participation in the pilots.

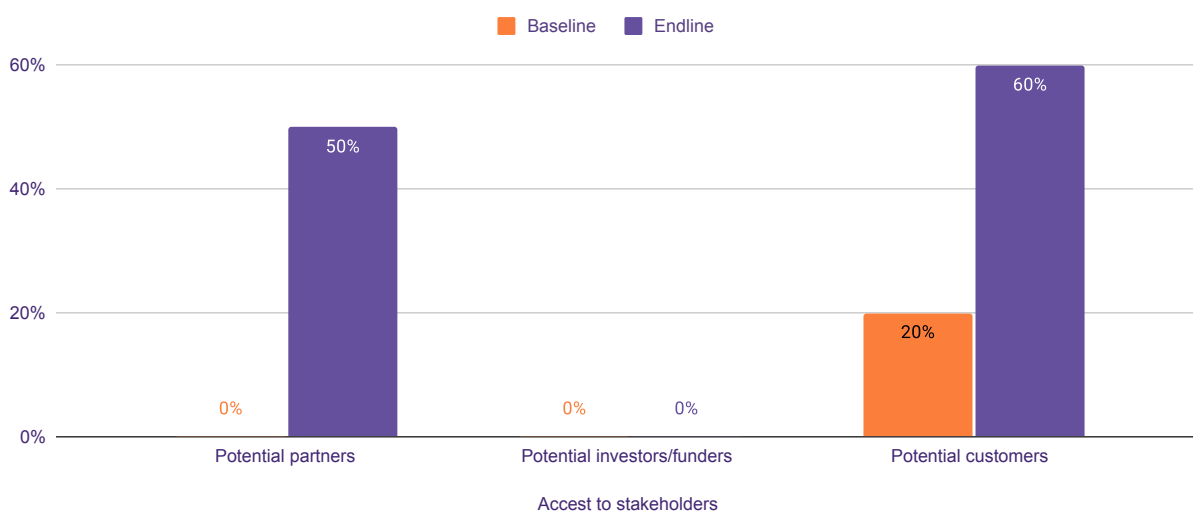


The biggest increases in satisfaction were for access to business experts and advisors and business networks. Senior entrepreneurs also reported a slight increase in their satisfaction to access mentors and coaches.

“Our goal was to clarify the viability of the project and its commercialization. Thanks to the networking with different representatives I finished clarifying our path and where to direct efforts.”

Entrepreneur
Impact Hub Lisbon

Rather surprisingly, entrepreneurs’ satisfaction with their access to peers declined in the course of the programme. Later stage entrepreneurs also reported an increase in satisfaction in accessing potential partners and potential customers, but not in potential investors or funders.



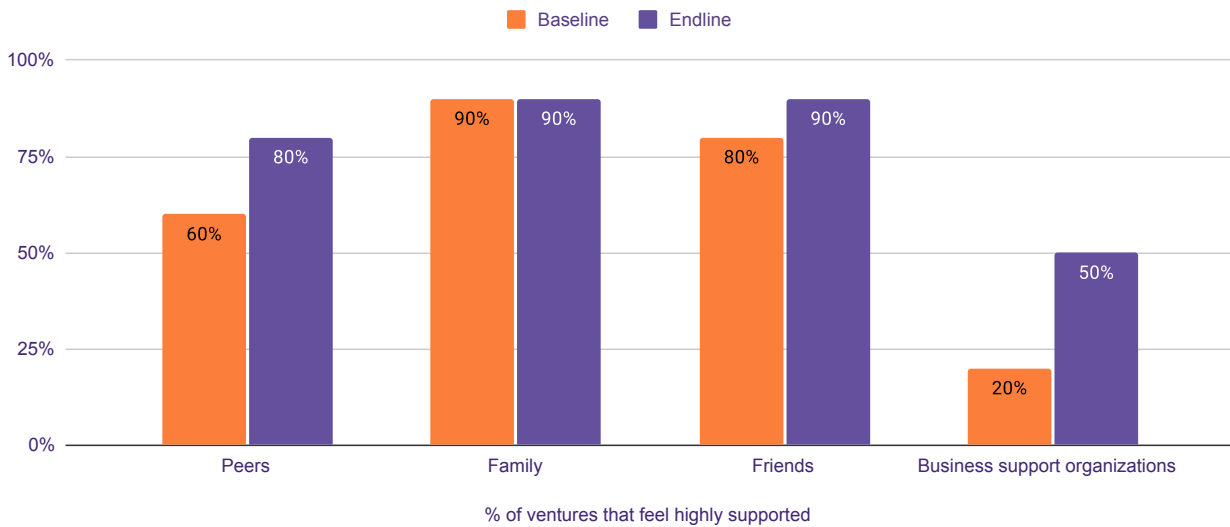
Participants made on average 7 new professional connections in the course of the programmes and gained on average 2 new partnerships.

Conclusions and recommendations

- The outcomes identified as relevant for senior entrepreneurs were improved social capital and increased access to business networks, mentors, and other support organisations.
- The pilots were successful in expanding entrepreneurs’ business networks. Senior entrepreneurs reported the biggest increases in access to business experts, advisors, and networks.
- The pilots also helped senior entrepreneurs access and secure new partners and customers.

INCREASE OF SUPPORT

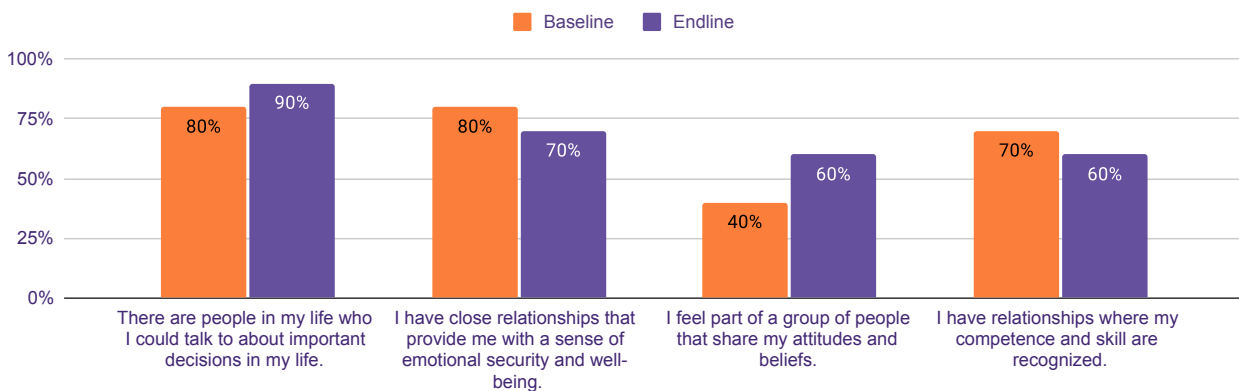
Senior entrepreneurs indicated a strong increase in support from business support organisations (30 percentage points). They also reported a moderate increase (20 percentage points) in the support from peers. On average they received 11 hours of peer support per month and 80% of respondents agreed that the support they invested in others came back to them over times.



The pilots had no effect on the level of supportiveness senior entrepreneurs receive from family and a slightly positive effect on the support received from friends.

Senior entrepreneurs were also asked to rate their agreement with several statements relating to social support and embeddedness.

% that highly agree



By the end of the programmes, entrepreneurs reported stronger agreement with feeling part of a group of people that share attitudes and beliefs and that there are people they can talk to about important decisions. They however also reported a decrease in agreement for having close relationships and relationships in which their competence and skills are being recognized.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- The outcomes identified as relevant for senior entrepreneurs were improved social support and social integration for the entrepreneur.
- In line with other CoPs, the pilots mainly had an effect on the support from business support organisations and peers. Out of all CoPs senior entrepreneurs reported the highest satisfaction with peer relationships as indicated with 80% agreement on reciprocity of relationships. Furthermore, the increase in feeling part of a group of people that share attitudes and beliefs, and an increase in people they can talk to about important decisions, indicates that pilots were successful in helping senior entrepreneurs build social capital and built a network of support.
- It is not clear why satisfaction with entrepreneurs' access to peers declined during the pilot, while feelings of supportiveness increased. One explanation could be that entrepreneurs expected a higher number of connections with peers but were satisfied with the support they received from the ones that they were able to connect with during the programme.
- As with other CoPs, the pilots had no or only little impact on the support received from friends and family.

ACCESS TO FINANCE

About 40% of respondents aimed to raise funds in the course of the programme, while close to 50% were still undecided at the start. For entrepreneurs for whom both baseline and endline data is available 60% wanted to raise funds. From this sample, 10% (or 1 entrepreneur) did ultimately obtain funding in the course of the programme.

Early stage entrepreneurs reported low financial management skills, which might contribute to the uncertainty on fundraising at the beginning of the programme. Later stage entrepreneurs reported some financial but little to no investment readiness skills at the start of the programme. With the help of the programmes they were able to grow their investment readiness skill set, which will be helpful in obtaining funding in the future. 20% of participants mentioned that they would like more support with finance and fundraising going forward.

Conclusions and recommendations

- The outcomes identified as relevant for senior entrepreneurs were less about general access to finance and more about an increase in personal income and financial stability. This was supported by the fact that one third of participants mentioned increased personal income and financial stability as main motivation to join the programme. Unfortunately, no data is available on how the pilots might have changed the actual or perceived stability of participants by the end of the programmes.
- Overall, early-stage senior entrepreneurs tended to be less likely to look for funding or identified as undecided, while later stage entrepreneurs with a clearer picture of their business were more interested in investment readiness and fundraising opportunities. Incubators should tailor the access to finance component of their programmes to the stage of entrepreneurship their participants are in. Early-stage entrepreneurs can benefit from a general education on access to finance, prerequisites, and funding instruments available. Senior entrepreneurs in particular might need help with understanding digital solutions such as crowdfunding. Later stage entrepreneurs can benefit from investment readiness training and access to a network of investors and funding opportunities.

At the end of the pilots, 90% of participants wanted to continue working on their venture in either full- or part-time capacity. Beyond the impact that the pilots had on the senior participants, the pilots also observed positive impacts on their own organisation and the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

“The programme had an important impact in our society. There are a lot of programmes supporting female entrepreneurship, young people, rural entrepreneurship, agro entrepreneurship, but no programmes at all to support senior entrepreneurship. Consequently, the initiative had big repercussions and raised awareness for the need to support senior entrepreneurship.”

EU|BIC CEEIARAGON

“We supported 8 seniors throughout the entire capacity building programme and helped them get clarity and next steps towards finding a new job or starting their own project/ business. We inspired them to stay active even after a long period of unemployment or retirement. We equipped them with new tools and knowledge to update themselves in the labour market. We helped them regain confidence and form a community of peers. The pilot also had a great impact on our own interpretation of senior entrepreneurship and provided powerful insights on the capacities, network and structure needed to offer a more inclusive incubation programme.”

Impact Hub Lisbon

“The partnership that implemented our project in Portugal worked extremely well and we started establishing contacts with stakeholders at local/regional and European level to further continue and improve the project, planning its continuity, sustainability and benchmark as a successful practice to be shared.”

EU|BIC IPN Incubadora



Migrants and Refugee entrepreneurs

Barriers to entrepreneurship for migrants and refugees

Migrants and refugees face a multitude of barriers to entrepreneurship. Refugees in particular are very often faced with a lack of the right to work, self-employment, or business ownership and a lack of clarity on implications of entrepreneurial activity for access to social protection. Within host countries, migrants and refugees can face physical, social, and cultural isolation caused by language barriers, visa regulatory mechanisms and cultural differences, which lead to subsequent difficulties in access to information, services such as banking, networks and connections.

Migrant and refugee entrepreneurs might have very limited financial and social capital, which is essential for starting or carrying on a business. Bias and prejudice of suppliers of financial services towards migrant entrepreneurs, in addition to overall lack of expertise and competence in understanding and meeting the needs of migrant businesses, can lead to excessive risk management and make it harder for these entrepreneurs to access the necessary resources at reasonable rates. Connected to this are also challenges related to migrants' or refugees' lack of local credit history or only short local credit history and collateral for loans, difficulty to access the documentation provided by a third country in this regard, as well as poor bookkeeping and substandard business plans. Similarly, migrant entrepreneurs can face a challenge in establishing a customer's network to support business growth outside of their community.

In the case of refugees and asylum seekers, uncertainty regarding status approval and relocation, which both take a significant amount of time, are barriers to entrepreneurship. Before setting up a business in a third country, migrants need to have a clear roadmap in mind regarding their short-term and long-term immigration options, to make sure they can comply with regulations and not to find themselves unable to continue to operate in the territory of another country once their business is already set up.

The lack of safety nets, either formal due to absence of labour law coverage and protection mechanisms, or informal due to moving to a place where there is not a welcoming pre-established likewise community they can become part of, creates further barriers to entrepreneurship. In some cases, refugees might face mental health issues related to traumatic experiences, which will impact their ability to focus on entrepreneurial opportunities.

Lastly, the lack of a functioning entrepreneurial ecosystem for migrants and refugees further prevents them from accessing entrepreneurship. There is a lack of funding, collaboration, knowledge-sharing and holistic services to enable newcomers to start and grow businesses. Furthermore, there is a

knowledge and information mismatch among different instances of governance (supranational, national, regional and local governments) regarding their respective roles in building an ecosystem and providing resources for the socio-economic integration of newcomers. This results in a lack of a coherent pathway of support services to enable migrants' and refugees' journey from idea to venture launch, growth and scaling. "Entrepreneurs are often unable to access existing mainstream entrepreneur support services due to specific additional barriers related to their migration background and limited local context knowledge and skills".

As a final note, it should be recognised that there is large diversity within the target group of migrant and refugee entrepreneurs (or any target group for that matter). The barriers to entrepreneurship will also be influenced by the level of education, prior business or work experience, income, and many other individual factors that refugees might face. As a result of individual and systemic factors, refugee businesses can range from very small-scale, livelihood sustaining businesses to flourishing niche businesses and high-performing ventures.

Outcomes for migrants and refugees and best practices

Outcomes relevant for migrant and refugee entrepreneurs' success that incubators and accelerators can have influence on are:

- Increase in business skills, especially:
 - Business planning and modelling
 - Accounting and financial management
 - Understanding of local context, markets, legalities and customers and customer acquisition
- Increase in skills:
 - Soft-skills: negotiation skills, networking skills, pitching skills
 - Increase in access to relevant business networks, mentors, and experts and networking opportunities to expand their knowledge and build trust outside of their peer groups
- Improved access to finance and financial services:
 - Financial literacy and personal financial planning
 - Access to capital:
 - How to prepare for meetings with lenders, pitch to investors, etc
 - How to access alternative forms of finance (e.g. crowdfunding)
 - Improved social capital and increase in access to relevant business networks, mentors, peer refugee/migrant entrepreneurs and support organisations
- Improved access to information and opportunities available to migrants and refugees (possibly to be made accessible in multiple languages)
- Improved social integration into the host country and decreased feelings of social isolation

To contribute to these outcomes, incubators can draw on a set of best practices from programme design, to recruitment and selection, and programme delivery. The following best practices were implemented by the pilots in the CoP for migrant and refugee entrepreneurs. The Migrants and Refugees CoP consisted of pilots run by 4 incubators in 4 countries: Impact Hub Reggio Emilia in Italy, EU|BIC Coventry University Social Enterprise CIC (CUSE) in the UK, EU|BIC BIC Euronova in Spain, and Impact Hub Istanbul in Turkey.

Impact Hub Istanbul worked to make their existing programme, Accelerate 2030, inclusive for migrants and refugees. Of their 15 overall participants, 20%, or 3 participants, were migrant-led. The main target group were investment-ready impact ventures that were ready to scale their solutions towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The programme consisted of a 6-month acceleration journey, where capacity building sessions were combined with networking and matchmaking opportunities with the private and public sector.

EU|BIC Coventry University's CUSE Social Enterprise Acceleration Incubator is a 16-week initial pilot incubation programme, which was split into 2 cohorts with the 1st being a pre-pilot programme to test the content and delivery methods prior to the official pilot with 6 entrepreneurs. The programme drew on a range of existing activities and entrepreneurs that are already present in the community, in addition to external best practices. The programme delivered masterclasses on a variety of social entrepreneurship topics including pitching, idea validation, growth finance, business planning, and social impact measurement. In addition, the incubator offered regular 1:1 coaching and peer learning sessions.

EU|BIC BIC Euronova's pilot consisted of a 3-month entrepreneurship and business academy, 1:1 coaching and mentoring, and expanding participants' networks by connecting entrepreneurs to other professionals for feedback on business ideas. Support was based on diagnostics and tailored to participants' needs and ranged from strengthening their personal brand to solving legal issues related to residence permits. The programme also covered alternative ways of financing such as crowdfunding and social grants specialised for entrepreneurs.

Impact Hub Reggio Emilia's pilot focused on identifying the strengths and weaknesses of participants' business models and clarifying them. The pilot helped migrant entrepreneurs expand their networks and offered 1:1 mentorship to meet the specific needs of participants.

Best practices in incubating and accelerating migrant and refugee entrepreneurs are summarised in the Better Incubation Collection of Best Practices in Inclusive Entrepreneurship Programmes and the Better Incubation Toolkit. The following selected best practices were tested by the pilots and proved to be particularly effective for the incubation of migrant and refugee entrepreneurs.

Conduct outreach to entrepreneurs in multiple languages and with outreach partners in order to scout entrepreneurs

Impact Hub Istanbul promoted the programme in Turkish, Arabic, and English to make it easier for non-Turkish speaking migrants and refugees to apply to the programme. They also worked with an Arabic-speaking outreach lead who worked with migrant organisations on scouting and provided additional support in Arabic to applicants.

“Providing translation in Arabic for the project social media posts as well as application form and guidance allowed to highlight that non-Turkish participants are welcomed to the programme too. This allowed to immediately attract the attention of foreign entrepreneurs on social media by using a language (English or Arabic) that is more understandable and accessible for them than Turkish.

Furthermore, an Arabic-speaking Outreach Lead reached out to targeted field organisations, channels and communities of migrant entrepreneurs in Turkey. Moreover, by looking at the draft applications saved in the online application system (F6S system), the Outreach Lead was able to monitor those who were in the process of submitting an application and reach out to offer further support or answer their questions.”

Impact Hub Istanbul

Despite the efforts, Impact Hub Istanbul pointed out that finding ventures that met all programme criteria proved to be very difficult.

“This is due to the limited number of established and scale-ready social & impact-driven ventures that are based in Turkey and that are also led by refugee entrepreneurs or that targeted refugee beneficiaries. Most refugee/migrant ventures are focused on livelihoods and did not have direct SDG focus or scaling potential that was needed by the programme.”

Impact Hub Istanbul

Providing support targeted to the needs of participants

Providing targeted support was a best practice widely used among the pilots. Migrants and refugee entrepreneurs tended to have specific challenges that would not be met with a standardised programme only, and in many cases, needed more hands-on support, which might be due to the lack of local networks. The support was provided by programme staff as well as dedicated coaches or mentors.

“Participants were asked to complete a diagnostic questionnaire. The answers allowed the team to design content for 1:1 progress meetings, which were led by the incubation manager along with the Outreach Lead. After assessing the specific needs of each entrepreneur, we were open to providing extra support that was not necessarily initially included in the programme, but that we deemed necessary for the sustainability of the ventures themselves since local and migrant entrepreneurs’ needs differ in general.”

Impact Hub Istanbul

“Individual assessments were conducted prior to starting the programme to ensure individual needs were met (including signposting to other support organisations if needed). Support was provided as a mixture of approaches and interactive sessions (group sessions, 1:1s, and peer mentoring) both online and in-person.”

EU|BIC Coventry University

“We matched entrepreneurs with mentors. In the meetings (online & in-person) mentors provided support for obstacles and answered questions, diving into legal, financial, marketing & networking, and motivational challenges and any other support the businesses needed. This is useful, especially for groups with low skills and low experience in their field of work.”

EU|BIC Euronova

Connecting participants with supportive people

Pilots focused on helping migrant and refugee entrepreneurs expand their networks, and providing valuable contacts the entrepreneurs might otherwise not have access to.

“The support provided to the businesses was successful, especially in two dimensions: the first was clarifying the business models by highlighting their main characteristics, strengths and weaknesses, focusing and enriching them. The second most useful service for entrepreneurs was expansion of their network. We organised meetings with experts from the Impact Hub Italian Community.”

Impact Hub
Reggio Emilia

Impact Hub Istanbul connected participants with potential partners, customers, and investors through both a private sector and a public sector engagement track that included training and matchmaking events. The team observed that “In general the public sector track appeared to be a better networking opportunity than the private sector one”.

In addition, a participant in one of the pilots highlighted the importance of role models and connecting with other successful migrant entrepreneurs. The comment also highlights the need for education of mentors and advisors on the particular barriers and needs of migrant and refugee entrepreneurs.

“Mentoring with people who have gone through the process and have been successful. The truth is that advice is important, but only a migrant understands the reality of what we live and when one receives advice from a national or specialist I have been able to clearly identify that many times the reality of our limitations is unknown.”

Entrepreneur,
EU|BIC Euronova

Results of the Better Incubation Programme

Data was collected from 10 migrant and refugee entrepreneurs and matching baseline and endline data is available from 8 entrepreneurs from across the pilots.

The sample was 50% female and 50% male. Half of respondents were between 26 and 35 years old, and the other half was older than 35 years. The cohort was highly educated with 80% of respondents having a graduate degree, which is the highest across all CoPs.

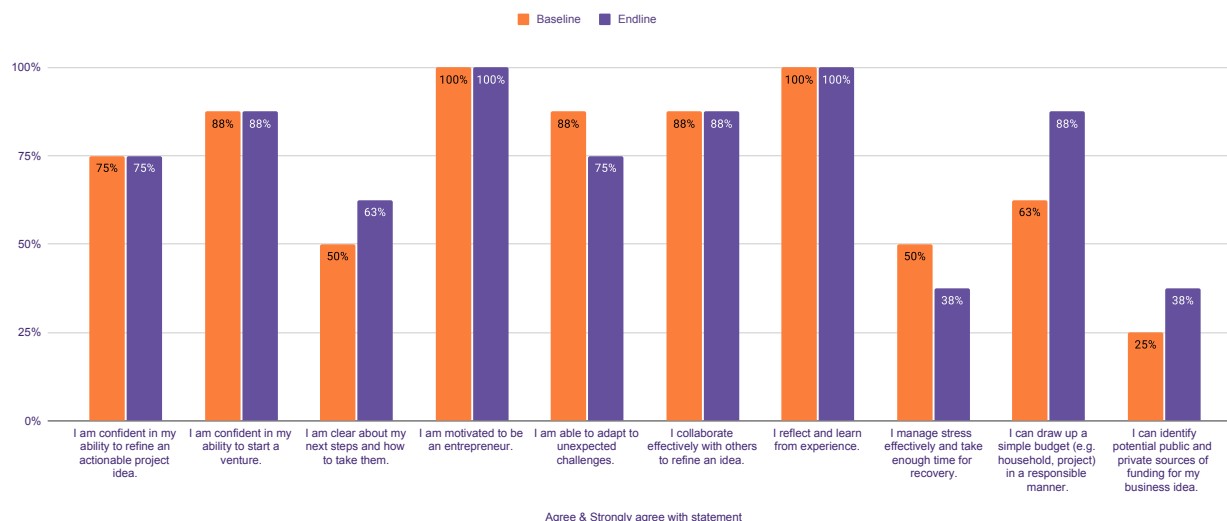
A little more than half of the respondents were in employment at the start of the programmes and another 42% were already running a business. The main motivation of entrepreneurs for joining the pilots was to receive support to start or grow their ventures (90%). At the start of the pilots, 60% of migrant or refugee entrepreneurs self-identified as being at the startup stage and 40% at the growth stage. As such, the participants in the migrant and refugee CoP likely were mature and later stage entrepreneurs. The stage and maturity of the venture influences the challenges experienced by entrepreneurs and also has effects on their results. 90% of respondents want to create social or environmental impact with their business, 10% were still undecided.

Participants were looking for support in areas such as access to finance, team and HR, Product and

business model development, and branding and marketing. They described the most challenging issues facing their business as being investment readiness, marketing and branding, financial management, staff skills and experience, and lack of office space.

ENTREPRENEURIAL CULTURE

The pilots assessed several dimensions of leadership skills and entrepreneurial capabilities.



The areas with the biggest percentage point increase from the start to the end of the programmes were the ability to draw up a simple budget (25 percentage point increase) and clarity about next steps and the ability to identify funding sources (both 13 percentage point increase). Entrepreneurs reported a decrease in agreement about their ability to adapt to unexpected challenges and manage stress effectively (both a decrease by 13 percentage points). All other areas remained stable.

Conclusions and Recommendations

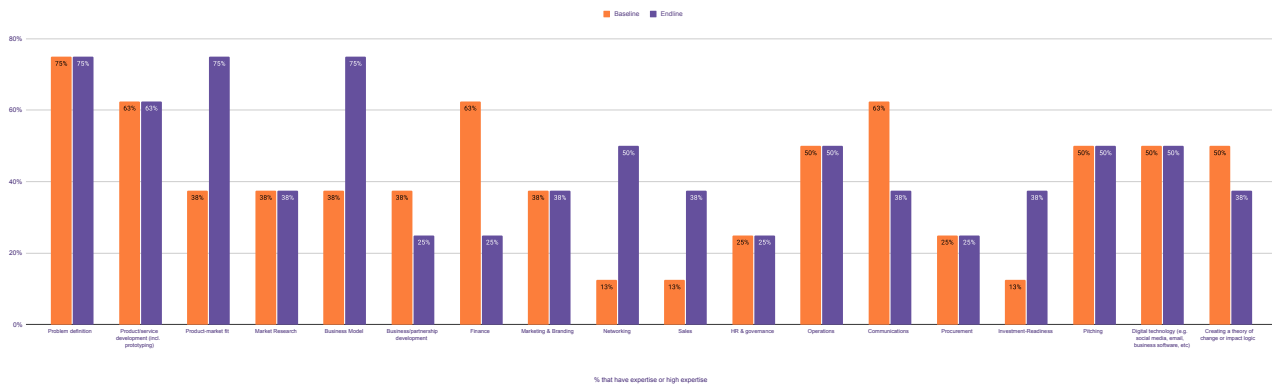
- Migrant and refugee entrepreneurs reported some increases in entrepreneurial capabilities. However, many items also remained stable, which might partly be explained by the fact that compared to other COPs the cohort tended to be more mature and later stage entrepreneurs.
- A possible explanation for the decrease in the ability to adapt to challenges and manage stress might be that entrepreneurs overestimated their abilities in these domains at the beginning of the programmes.

BUSINESS AND IMPACT SKILLS

With the help of the pilots, migrant and refugee entrepreneurs increased their skills in several areas, most notably in regards to product-market fit (38 percentage point increase), business model development and networking (both 38 percentage points). They also reported an increase in sales skills and investment-readiness (both 23 percentage points).

“My goal was to define the business model, the product and the target client and I achieved it.”

Entrepreneur, Impact Hub Reggio Emilia



However, entrepreneurs also reported decreases in a broad array of general business skills such as finance, communications, partnerships development, and theory of change. Some skills stayed stable.

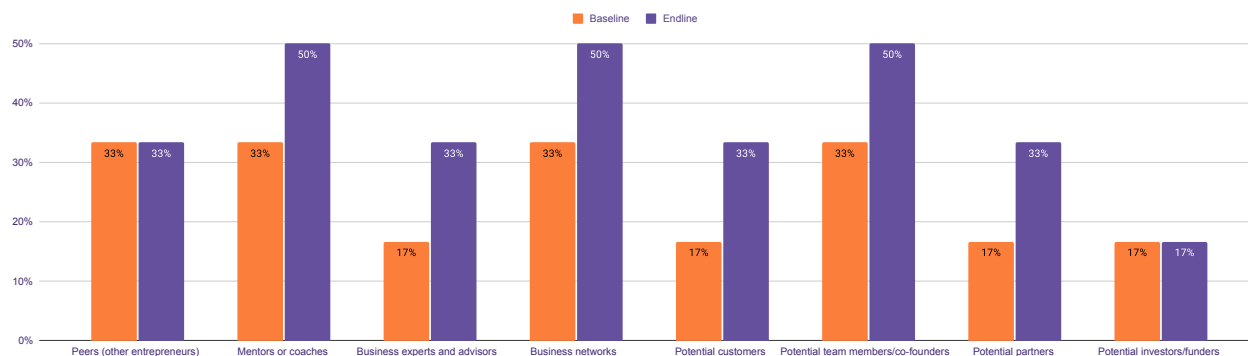
Legal skills were not asked as part of the survey; however, several entrepreneurs highlighted the need for legal support as part of entrepreneur support programmes.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- The skills identified as relevant for migrant and refugees were increases in business skills such as business planning and modelling, financial management, and understanding of local context, markets, legalities and customers and customer acquisition. In addition, an increase in soft skills such as negotiation, networking, and pitching were also prioritised.
- Under soft skills, entrepreneurs increased their networking skills while pitching skills remained the same. This might be explained by the fact that participants seem to be experienced or later stage entrepreneurs that likely already had solid pitching skills at the start.
- Entrepreneurs increased very specific business skills such as product market fit, business model development, sales and investment readiness. These are all skills along the journey from startup to up and running or growing business, so this can be considered a success for the pilots. Skills along local context and market understanding were not measured as part of the surveys.
- The decreases on a general set of general business and impact skills are likely to be explained by entrepreneurs overestimating their skills at the beginning of the programmes and then adjusting their perceived skill level at the end of the programmes.

ACCESS TO NETWORKS

Migrant and refugee entrepreneurs were able to expand their networks across a variety of stakeholders (mentors, experts, business networks, potential partners, customers and team members) due to participation in the pilots.



Satisfaction with participants' access to peers and potential investors remained the same. Nevertheless, access to peers could have been further strengthened by the pilots as illustrated by this comment on improvement suggestions by a participant.

"Connecting us with other entrepreneurs with a migrant background. (...) I would have liked to have the opportunity to build relationships and connections with others who are in the same situation."

Entrepreneur
EU|BIC Euronova

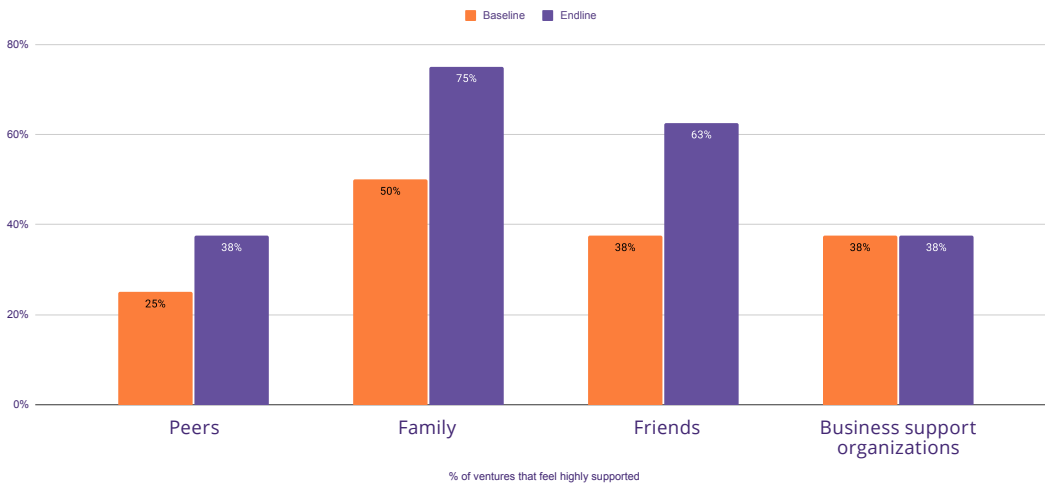
Participants made on average 3 new valuable professional connections in the course of the programmes and gained on average 1 new partnership.

Conclusions and recommendations

- The outcomes identified as relevant for migrant and refugee entrepreneurs were an increase in access to relevant business networks, mentors, and experts and networking opportunities to expand their knowledge and build trust outside of their peer groups.
- The pilots were successful in expanding entrepreneurs' business networks. Migrant entrepreneurs' satisfaction with their access to networks grew in particular for mentors, experts, business networks, potential customers, team members, and partners. The pilots also helped migrant entrepreneurs access and secure new partners.

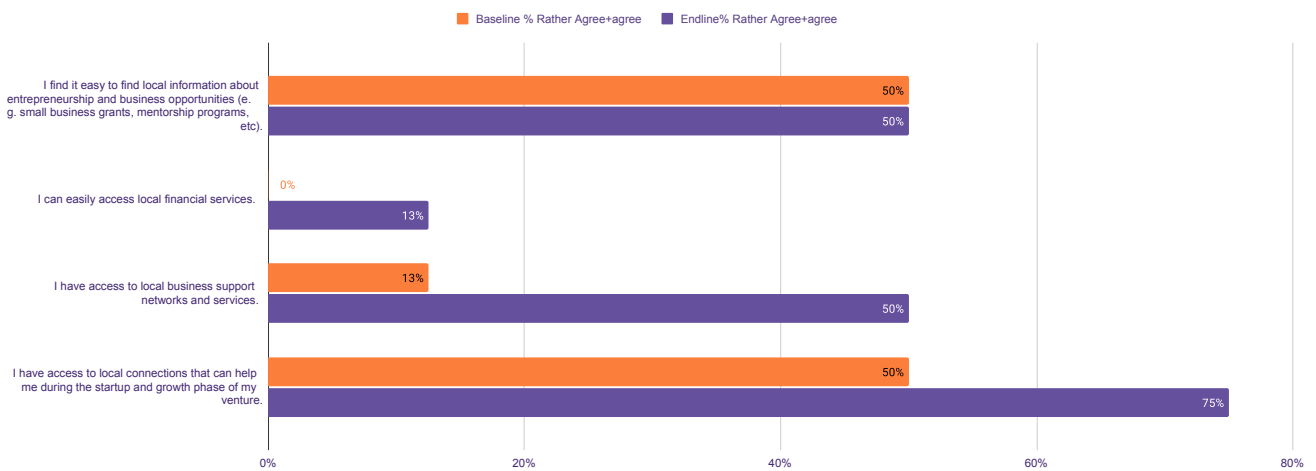
INCREASE IN SUPPORT

Interestingly migrant and refugee entrepreneurs indicated a strong increase in support from family and friends and some increase in the support from peers. Support from business support organisations stayed stable, despite the increase in access to business networks described above.



Migrant entrepreneurs reported an average of 5 hours of peer support per month. 38% of respondents agreed that the support they invested in others came back to them over time.

Migrant and refugee entrepreneurs were also asked to rate their agreement with several statements relating to local embeddedness and access to local services.



With the help of the pilots, migrant and refugee entrepreneurs increased their access to local business support networks and services, their access to local connections to help grow their venture, and their access to local finance.

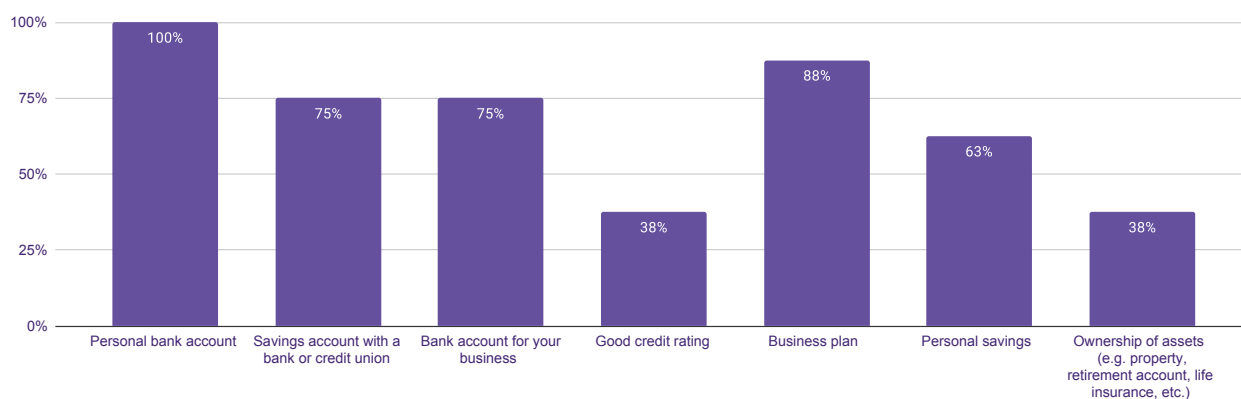
Conclusions and Recommendations

- The outcomes identified as relevant for migrant and refugee entrepreneurs were improved social capital and increase in access to relevant business networks, mentors, peer refugee/migrant entrepreneurs and support organisations.
- In contrast to other CoPs, the pilots had the largest effect on support from friends and family. It is unclear what the reasons for this are.
- Compared to other COPs the increase in access to, and support from, peers was rather moderate for migrant and refugee entrepreneurs, also indicated by the fact that only 38% felt that the time they invested in peer support came back to them over time and that entrepreneurs' satisfaction with their access to peers remained stable throughout the pilots. The reasons for this are unclear and could range from peer support being less relevant for this, later-stage, target group, to the target group not recognizing peer support as important, and potentially a lack of focus from pilots to foster peer connections.
- The pilots were successful in helping migrant and refugee entrepreneurs access local business networks and connections.

ACCESS TO FINANCE

Improved access to finance including financial literacy was one of the outcomes identified for migrant and refugee entrepreneurs. Migrant entrepreneurs were asked about their ownership and power over financial assets, which often are a prerequisite for accessing finance. Among the participants, all had ownership over a personal bank account and three quarters of participants also had a savings and business account and 63% could draw on personal savings. Only 38% indicated a good credit rating.

% that have access to:



From a sample of 8 migrant entrepreneurs, 88%, or 7 of them, aimed to raise funds in the course of the pilots. Ultimately 1 entrepreneur successfully obtained funding in the course of the programme. However, with the help of the programmes they were able to grow their investment readiness skills, which should be helpful in obtaining funding in the future. Many of the entrepreneurs cited access to finance as a need following up from the programme.

Conclusions and recommendations

- Improved access to finance and financial services including financial literacy and personal financial planning, and access to capital were identified as relevant outcomes for migrant and refugee entrepreneurs.
- Overall, the sample of respondents already had certain things in place such as personal, savings, and business accounts, savings to draw from, and business plans. This seems to be in line with the more later-stage and highly educated profile of entrepreneurs in the sample. This differs to some extent from the profile of migrant and refugee entrepreneurs described under barriers to entrepreneurship and is a reminder that defining target groups by their vulnerability has limitations and that all entrepreneurs participating in the Better Incubation pilots contain a multitude of identities.
- With the help of the pilots, participants increased their skills in drawing up budgets, identifying local funding sources, and investment readiness.
- With the exception of one participant, they were not yet able to raise capital in the course of the programmes and access to finance offerings by the pilots were considered of limited usefulness to participants. The majority of respondents expressed a need for financial support and access to investors and funders as a follow up from the programme, underlining the need for entrepreneur support programmes to better enable migrant and refugee entrepreneurs to connect with potential funding sources.

At the end of the pilots, all participants wanted to continue working on their venture in either full-time or part-time capacity.



Entrepreneurs with disabilities

Barriers to entrepreneurship for people with disabilities

The general challenges to entrepreneurship such as lack of business skills, missing access to capital, and lack of proper business support, are further compounded for entrepreneurs with disabilities. Limited relevant education and employment experience can result in significant skill gaps in terms of specialised business management, legal and financial skills and knowledge. People with disabilities often experience difficulties financing new start-ups due to limited personal financial resources (savings, home ownership), which, in turn, are partly due to other systemic barriers like poor education and the concentration of disabled employees in low-paid occupations; poor credit rating after long-term benefit receipt; disinterest/ discrimination on the part of banks; lack of accessible information on sources of grants and loans.

Furthermore, entrepreneurs with disabilities often lack appropriate and sensitive business support services. This can range from lack of tailored training to individual needs to unhelpful attitudes of business advisers. “Business advisers are often reluctant to recommend self-employment as a career option for disabled people and sometimes actively attempt to dissuade them. Such views might be a consequence of advisers’ inadequate or stereotypical understandings of the activity restrictions arising from specific conditions and/or misperceptions of support recipients’ capabilities as well as a genuine regard for the risks disabled people face in starting and running businesses”. In addition, entrepreneurs might face a lack of support services in accessible formats (e.g. Braille) or might face mobility and physical accessibility challenges regarding transport to the premises where support is provided. Also programme language can influence the perceived accessibility of support: “For example, entrepreneurs who experience disability often have lower growth aspirations and may not identify with terms such as ‘entrepreneur’ because they do not see themselves as exploiting an opportunity or being innovative”. Moreover, entrepreneurs with disabilities might not want to be identified or labelled by their disability and prefer mainstream programmes over programmes tailored to people with disabilities.

Entrepreneurs with disabilities might also face increased labour costs as some entrepreneurs with disabilities need to hire assistants to help them undertake tasks that many people without disabilities may be able to do on their own (e.g. moving merchandise, inputting data into computer software), which increases their labour costs and puts them at a competitive disadvantage.

Unfortunately, entrepreneurs with disabilities still face discrimination, prejudice, and social exclusion that get further compounded when considering additional (intersectional) vulnerabilities for people with disabilities like age, income, gender, and ethnicity.

Lastly, people with disabilities also face individual challenges to entrepreneurship such as lack of confidence and risk aversion. Because of lack of access to quality education and lack of confidence, people with disabilities may have difficulties identifying a business opportunity, developing a business idea and engaging with the available support infrastructure in a meaningful way, contributing to limited aspirations, which in turn can feed the already low levels of confidence related to entrepreneurship. This is further compounded by the unsupportive role of family and friends who often discourage people with disabilities from starting a business. In addition, there is often a fear of losing the security of regular benefit income when other income is generated. “Awareness of eligibility for benefits is incomplete among the population of people with disabilities and contributes to perceptions of self-employment as ‘risky’”.

Outcomes for entrepreneurs with disabilities and best practices

Outcomes relevant for the success of entrepreneurs with disabilities that incubators and accelerators can have influence on are:

- Increased confidence
- Increased knowledge of benefits and risks of self-employment/entrepreneurship for a person with disabilities
- Increased aspirations for themselves
- Increased feelings of autonomy, independence, and agency
- Improved social support and social integration for the entrepreneur:
 - Support from peers
 - Support from intermediaries
 - Support from family and friends
- Increase in business, entrepreneurship, and employment skills, including technical/digital and soft skills
- Improved access to finance and financial services:
 - Financial literacy and personal financial planning (to address lack of credit, little savings and collateral, etc)
 - Access to (inclusive) capital
 - Improved personal income
- Increased access to inclusive business support services, mentors/coaches and advisors

To contribute to these outcomes, incubators can draw on a set of best practices from programme design, to recruitment and selection, and programme delivery. The following best practices were imple-

mented by the pilots in the CoP for entrepreneurs with disabilities. The CoP consisted of pilots run by initially 4 incubators in 4 countries: Impact Hub Athens (Greece), Impact Hub Milan (Italy), EU|BIC Entreprene.wapi (Belgium), and EU|BIC Associate bwcon GmbH (Germany). A fifth organisation, EU|BIC Inkubator Sežana (Slovenia), joined later.

Impact Hub Athens supported 5 teams with a total of 7 participants. The incubation programme consisted of 4 workshops and offered entrepreneurs individual weekly meetings with the coach and the cohort manager in order to deep dive into the tools and get hands-on feedback while using them and taking decisions for the development path of their initiative. Entrepreneurs were actively connected with relevant experts, potential partners, and more. The programme also included a reflection session with participants at the end to discuss how entrepreneurship can be promoted within the community of people with disabilities, how to create connections with business support organisations, and how the entrepreneurial ecosystem can open and be more welcoming to people with disabilities.

The pilot programme by Impact Hub Milan focused on providing four entrepreneurs with disabilities with soft and business skills and the business tools, frameworks, and awareness needed to start their own business. Impact Hub Milan designed the programme in a way that would ensure accessibility for entrepreneurs throughout all phases and activities from application, pitch, use of materials, pilot activities. The pilot included mentorship, the involvement of role models (other entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs with disabilities), networking within the Impact Hub community, support for the creation of the pitch and for the final presentation, and partnerships with associations working with people with disabilities.

EU|BIC Entreprene.wapi is the economic development agency of the Wallonie Picarde region in Belgium. The agency wanted to adapt its entrepreneurship support programmes for people with cognitive disabilities. The pilot allowed them to bring together stakeholders, learn more about the barriers people with disabilities face to entrepreneurship and the challenges in offering valuable support. The programme has not incubated entrepreneurs with disabilities yet.

EU|BIC associate bwcon supported 3 entrepreneurs with business development support and consulting in regards to access to funding and connections to potential partners.

EU|BIC Inkubator Sežana and the Association of Deaf People Slovenia developed the pilot programme “Creative Business School for People with Hearing Loss”, a three-day free of charge entrepreneurship school intended for those in the community of loss of hearing and hard hearing people who have an entrepreneurial idea and want to develop it, as well as those who want to acquire entrepreneurial skills. The first part of the curriculum involved the Higher School for Design Sežana. Participants used different creative thinking techniques to build their entrepreneurial idea and create a prototype. The second part focused on entrepreneurial skills and business model development. The pilot had between 8-10 participants and 5 entrepreneurs received further mentoring.

Best practices in incubating and accelerating entrepreneurs with disabilities are summarised in the Better Incubation Collection of Best Practices in Inclusive Entrepreneurship Programmes and the Better Incubation Toolkit. The following selected best practices were tested by the pilots and proved to be particularly effective for the incubation of entrepreneurs with disabilities.

Work with outreach partners to scout participants

Working with partner organisations for outreach and promotion was very useful for scouting participants as well as for gaining credibility in the disability community as an incubator

“Again, the importance of partnering with organisations who are already working with the target group is very helpful. Additionally, having a personal connection makes a big difference because several attempts that were made earlier had not been successful without that personal connection.”

EU|BIC Associate bwcon

“Recruitment happened through people we know well in the disability world- people who are not necessarily disabled but they are well respected in the disability communities, so they have worked as our guarantees for authentic interest, not as people who want to take advantage of them for a reason”

Impact Hub Athens

Designing the programme with the target group

Pilots in the CoP for people with disabilities paid special attention to engaging (aspiring) entrepreneurs with disabilities as well as other organisations working with the target group in the design of the programmes.

“We interviewed entrepreneurs with disabilities and representatives of associations of people with disabilities while designing the incubation programme to get a better understanding of the needs of the target entrepreneurs.”

Impact Hub Milan

“We organised a round table bringing together the 9 Entreprises de Travail Adaptés (sheltered enterprises employing people with physical or cognitive disabilities) of the region with the idea of creating a cluster of companies. We gained better knowledge of the ecosystem and understanding of our own limits in supporting people with disabilities.”

EU|BIC Entrepreneurs.wapi

Making programmes accessible for people with disabilities

Increasing the accessibility of programmes is key in giving entrepreneurs with disabilities the opportunity to be part of an incubator. Accessibility requirements vary widely depending on the type of disability and incubators need to be informed about what is needed.

“We provided sign language interpreters and technical gear for people who are hard of hearing. There are sometimes problems when interpreting specific technical language.”

Inkubator Sežana

“Mobility disabilities are much easier to work with, since there is technology that allows entrepreneurs to write even though they might not have control of their arms. Visual disability needs more care due to the explanation of the images (written description) and the transformation of all material in word / readable for the reading programmes. We have not worked with hearing impairment. It is a disability that requires extra cost, due to the translation that would be needed and it is definitely quite expensive.”

Impact Hub Athens

Delivering programmes online can be an opportunity to increase accessibility

“Delivering the workshops & coaching meetings online definitely is working well and decreases a lot of barriers for both transport and adaptation to blind participants with the audio description.”

Impact Hub Athens

Connecting entrepreneurs with supportive people

It is important for entrepreneurs with disabilities to receive tailored support based on their individual needs and to be connected to supportive people and get the ability to grow their network. Networking training and opportunities, particularly outside the disability space, are important.

“The key challenges that we notice are: 1- since they are not people who will participate in networking events or will mingle with people outside the disability area, they lack connections and thus access to funding, to expertise, to inspiration, to opportunities. They also do not know how to interact in that aspect. So, they would not know how to pitch, to explain what they want to do, to ask for help or to share (always within a business and project framework).”

Impact Hub Athens

There also is a need to inform and train programme delivery partners, such as mentors, on anti-discrimination, bias, specific needs of people with disabilities, etc

“This phase took longer than expected also because it was necessary to make a short but substantial introduction to the mentors about mentorship to people with disabilities.”

Impact Hub Milan

Invest in business skills training

For a variety of reasons entrepreneurs with disabilities might have a higher need for business skills development. Living with public financial support and with the help of support volunteers and specialists, the entrepreneurial mindset and skills of people with disabilities are likely to be different.

“We have noticed a lack of «business sensitivity» with most of the entrepreneurs.”

Impact Hub Milan

“Since the entrepreneurs tend to live within philanthropic "safety" they consider making money somewhat "unethical". So, infusing the business mindset, breaking down the idea that doing business is for people who are not "good"- because "you are asking for money", they feel uncomfortable for selling something instead of receiving philanthropic support.”

Impact Hub Athens

Overall, it can be noted that working with entrepreneurs with disabilities requires a substantial investment by incubators to truly learn about the target group, their needs and challenges, and to be able to design authentic and valuable programmes for entrepreneurs with disabilities.

“Our team needed to learn a different approach compared with the management of an ordinary startup programme, and deal with different timing, needs, and approaches with most of the entrepreneurs.”

Impact Hub Milan

For BSOs and incubators wanting to offer programmes for people with disabilities, it is particularly important to be knowledgeable and authentic. BSOs should consider hiring people with disabilities themselves and might need to invest in training of staff and more dedication to the cause overall.

“Additional training for BSOs regarding how to reach this target group is important. On one hand how to communicate around the topic of disability, and on the other to move beyond the standard day to day business and shift the priorities in order to reach out to organisations who are already working with and supporting people with disabilities.”

EU|BIC Associate bwcon

Furthermore, entrepreneurs with disabilities generally do not want to be seen and addressed through their disability only. Incubators need to be sensitive to the lived realities of entrepreneurs with disabilities and can benefit from an asset-based approach instead of a primarily vulnerability-based approach.

“When we focused on early-stage but already funded companies, we learned that they were dealing more with regular business problems and wanted to be associated less with the disabilities the people on their team had. They would like to be treated as “normal” startups and entrepreneurs.”

EU|BIC Associate bwcon

“The feedback from initial calls with potential participants was a reluctance around being placed in a specific programme for people with Disabilities and so instead we focused on individualised support based on their specific needs and selected participants who are already established as Start-ups and who can therefore benefit from our existing Business Development Support services and Access to Grants and Funding that we can provide, rather than Entrepreneurs who are still in the Idea Generation Phase.”

EU|BIC Associate bwcon

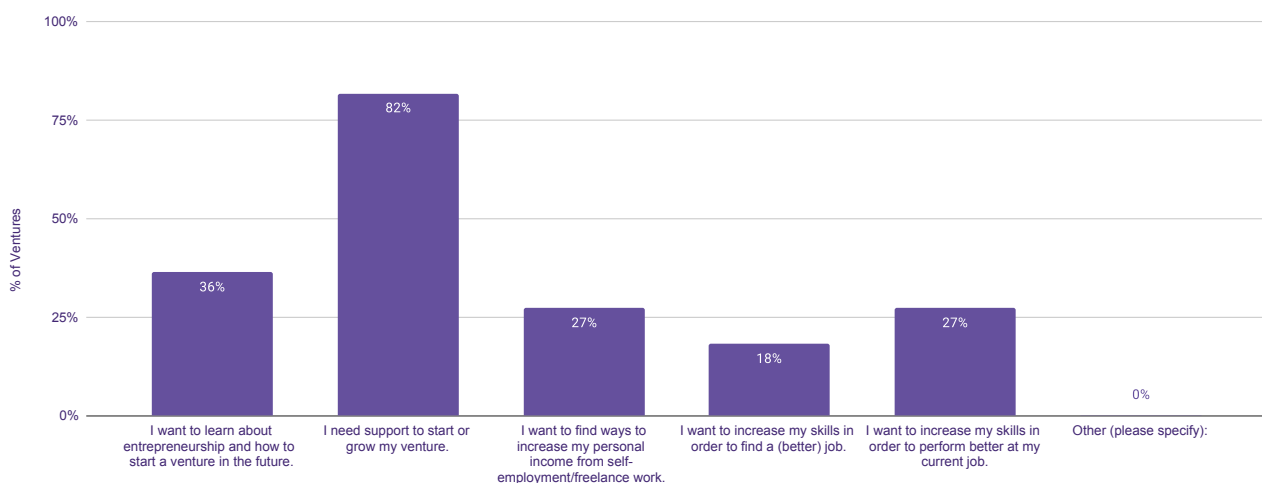
Results of the Better Incubation Programme

Data was collected from 11 entrepreneurs. Matching baseline and endline data unfortunately are only available for 3 entrepreneurs from across the pilots. Results therefore have to be interpreted with caution and cannot be considered representative of the target group as a whole.

6 of the 11 respondents were male, 4 female, and 1 preferred not to answer. 54% of respondents had an undergraduate or graduate degree as the highest form of completed education. In terms of occupation, 45% of respondents (5 out of 11) were either a solo business owner or running a business with employees, and 27% (3 out of 11) were employed.

In terms of motivations for programme participation, the overwhelming majority indicated the need for support to start and grow their venture.

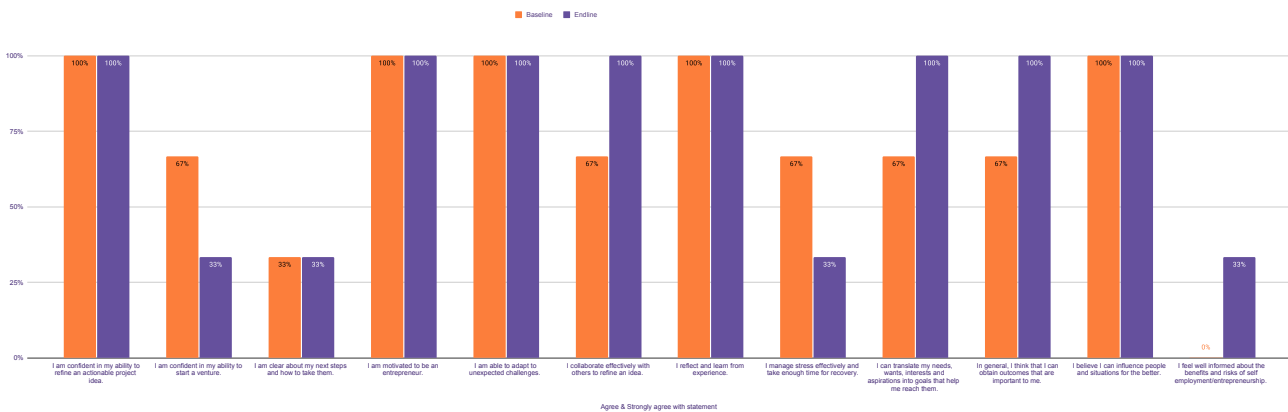
Main reason to participate



8 of the entrepreneurs identified their venture as being at idea or startup stage and 3 at growth stage. With the exception of 1 entrepreneur, all respondents indicated that they want to create positive social or environmental impact through their ventures.

ENTREPRENEURIAL CULTURE

Entrepreneurs with disabilities, who provided data, were able to improve their entrepreneurial capacities in regards to effective collaboration with others to refine ideas, their ability to translate wants, needs, interest, and inspiration into actionable goals, their confidence in being able to obtain outcomes important to them, and their level of information about the benefits and risks of self-employment.



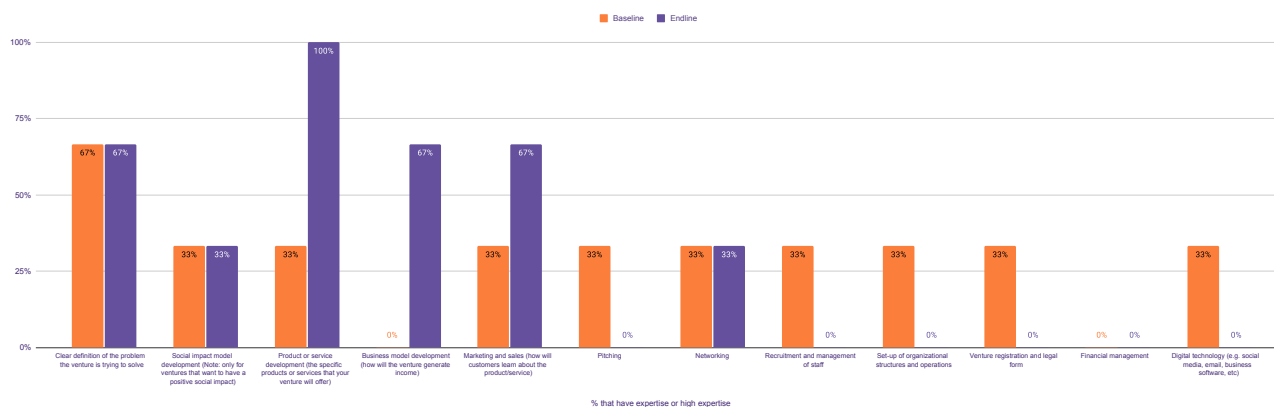
Many other capacities stayed the same, albeit high. However, entrepreneurs with disabilities also reported a decrease in their confidence to start a venture and their ability to manage stress effectively.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- The outcomes initially identified as relevant for entrepreneurs with disabilities were increased confidence, increased knowledge of benefits and risks of self-employment/entrepreneurship, increased aspirations for self, and increased feelings of autonomy, independence, and agency.
- With the help of the pilots some of those outcomes were achieved. At the end of the pilots, entrepreneurs who provided data felt better informed about the risks and benefits of self-employment and entrepreneurship. They also reported increases in terms of personal agency and their confidence in being able to obtain outcomes important to them. However, entrepreneurs reported a decrease in the confidence in their ability to start a venture. It might be an - unintended - consequence of the pilots that as entrepreneurs learn more about what it takes to start a venture, their confidence decreases. Incubators might want to be aware of this tendency and consider interventions that might help entrepreneurs feel more confident as they develop their ideas and enterprises.

BUSINESS AND IMPACT SKILLS

Entrepreneurs with disabilities were able to improve their product and service development, business model development, and marketing skills.



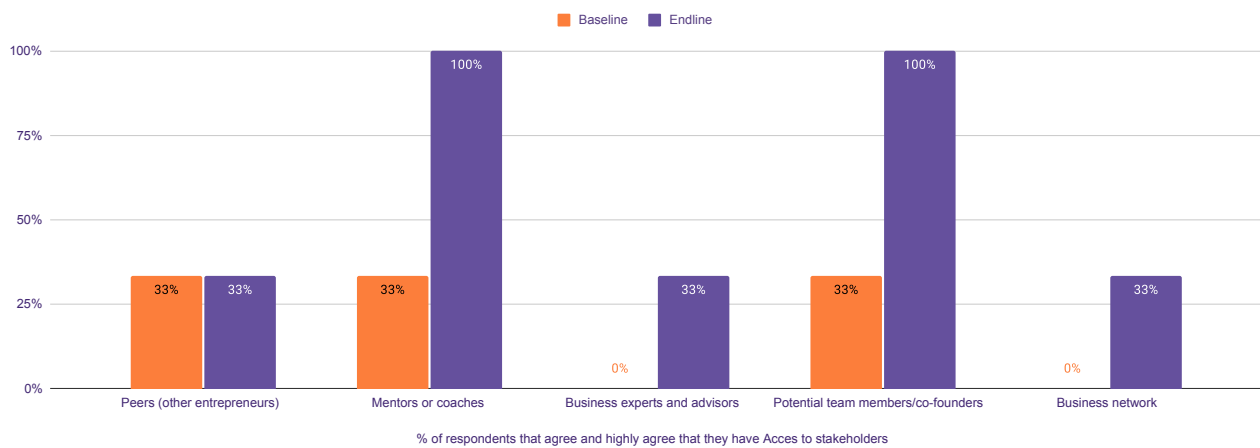
Entrepreneurs reported decreases in pitching, recruitment and management of staff, setup of organisational structures, venture registration, and digital technology. Skills relating to problem definition, social impact model development, and networking stayed stable.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- The outcomes initially identified as relevant for entrepreneurs with disabilities were an increase in general business, entrepreneurship, and employment skills, including technical/digital and soft skills.
- The limited results paint a mixed picture. On the one hand, entrepreneurs were able to improve essential entrepreneurship skills, particularly for the early stages of business development (business model and product development and marketing). On the other hand, entrepreneurs assessed a variety of skills lower at the end than at the beginning of the programme. One possible explanation might be that as participants expanded their knowledge throughout the pilots, they lowered their assessment of their own business skills.

ACCESS TO NETWORKS

Entrepreneurs with disabilities were able to increase their satisfaction in regards to their access to mentors, coaches, business experts and advisors, potential team members, and business networks. Participants' access to peers remained stable.



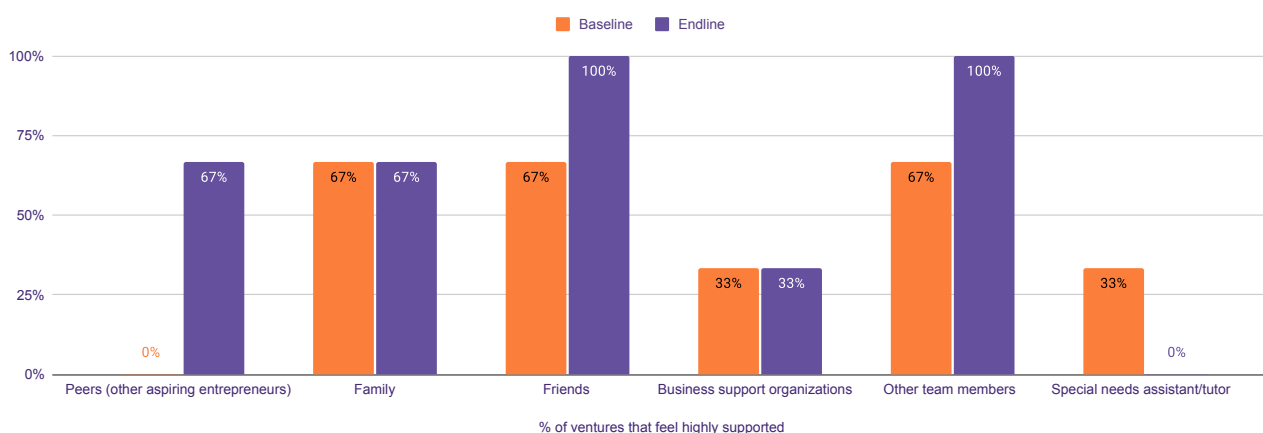
In addition, participants made on average 2 valuable connections through the programme.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- The outcome identified as relevant for entrepreneurs with disabilities was an increase in access to business support services, mentors, coaches and advisors.
- The results from the limited sample of respondents indicated that this outcome was achieved and that participants were able to expand their networks of mentors, coaches, and to some extent, business networks and experts.

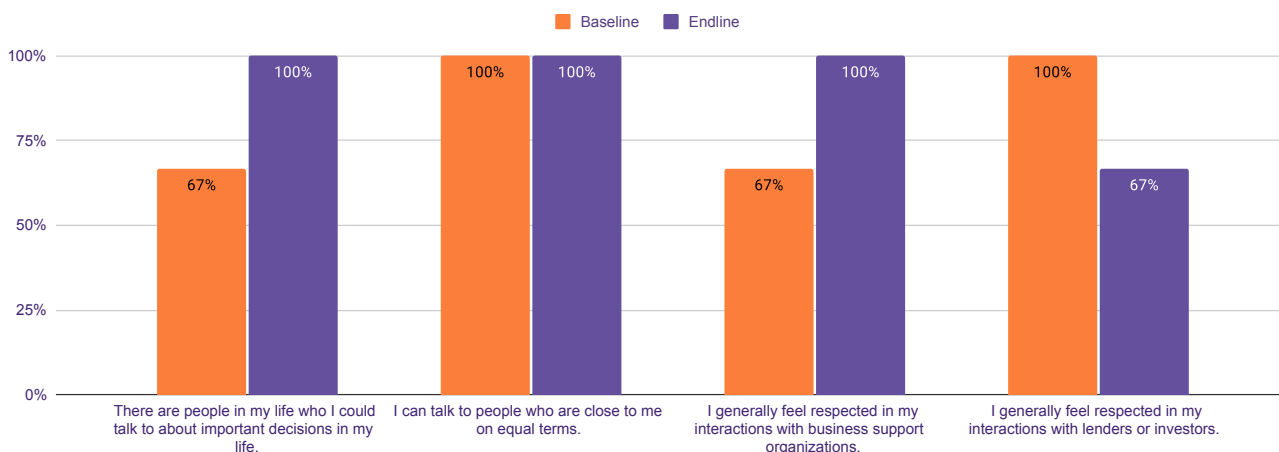
INCREASE IN SUPPORT

Entrepreneurs were asked how supported they felt by various groups of people at the start and at the end of the programme. Supportiveness increased for peers, friends, and other team members. Support from family and business support organisations remained the same.



In terms of peer relationships, entrepreneurs received on average 4 hours of support from other participants. Participants rated reciprocity, defined as time and support invested in peer relationships coming back over time, as neutral. However, two out of three ventures responded that engaging in a community of peers strengthened their own entrepreneurial motivation.

Entrepreneurs were asked further about their available support at the beginning and end of the pilots. Participants reported an increase for having people in their life that they can talk to about important decisions, as well as the degree to which they feel respected in interactions with business support organisations. For investors and lenders on the contrary, respectful interactions declined.



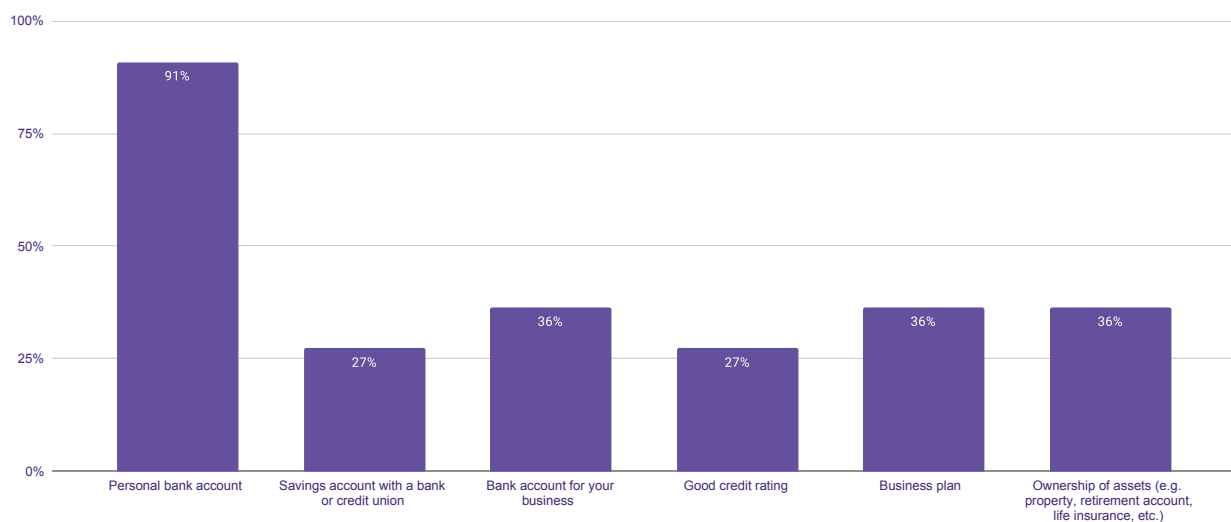
Conclusions and Recommendations

- The outcomes identified as relevant for entrepreneurs with disabilities were improved social support for the entrepreneur, particularly from peers, intermediaries, and family and friends.
- The results from the limited sample of respondents indicated that this outcome was partially achieved. Supportiveness increased for peers and friends, but not for business support organisations and family. Still, the quality of relationships with business support organisations appears to have improved during the programmes.

- The drop in feeling respected in interactions with lenders or investors can be a signal for incubators to consider educating investors and funders about the needs of entrepreneurs with disabilities and provide anti-bias training for actors in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- Entrepreneurs with disabilities were also asked about the support and involvement of their special needs assistant or tutor. The data is too limited to draw conclusions and ranged from neutral to high involvement in day-to-day decision making.

ACCESS TO FINANCE

In terms of access to financial assets, nearly all participants had access to a personal bank account. Less than half of participants had access to other tools such as savings, a business account, a business plan, good credit rating, and ownership of assets.



54% of respondents indicated that they wanted to raise funds in the course of the pilots, but ultimately this was not achieved.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- The outcomes identified as relevant for entrepreneurs with disabilities were improved access to finance with a focus on financial literacy, personal financial planning, and access to (inclusive) capital.
- Looking at the limited data available, the described outcomes were not achieved. This might be due to a mix of factors ranging from lack of investment readiness of entrepreneurs, to ventures being too early-stage, and pilots not necessarily prioritising access to finance at this stage for entrepreneurs with disabilities. Incubators might need to think in terms of more long-term support for entrepreneurs with disabilities, from the very early business idea and business skills training, to helping the entrepreneur grow their venture and provide access to investors and funders at the appropriate venture stage.
- The decline in feeling respected by investors and lenders might also indicate a need for training of funders and investors on the needs of entrepreneurs with disabilities as well as anti-bias training.

At the end of the pilots, all respondents indicated that they plan to continue working on their venture in part-time or full-time capacity.

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Annex

Women entrepreneurs Best practice indicators

PROMOTION, APPLICATION, SELECTION

Desired Outcome: Increase the number of applications from women entrepreneurs

→ # of women entrepreneurs /women-led ventures applying to the programme

Activities and outputs: Implement a promotion and scouting process that is gender inclusive and representative of women entrepreneurs

- # of female role models highlighted in communication materials
- Communication and marketing materials reviewed for gender inclusion (e.g. inclusive language, use of pronouns, etc.) and representation of women
- # of promotion events held specifically for women entrepreneurs
- # of outreach partners with connection to women entrepreneurs engaged in programme promotion

Activities and outputs: Implement a gender inclusive application process

- Application form tested for gender bias/accessibility for women entrepreneurs
- Application process and communication reviewed for gender inclusion and accessibility to women entrepreneurs
- # of women entrepreneurs invited to apply

Desired Outcome: Increase the number of women entrepreneurs selected

→ # of women entrepreneurs /women-led ventures selected to the programme

Activities and outputs: Implement a gender inclusive selection process

- # and % of women on the selection panel
- Selection profile and criteria tested and adapted to increase accessibility for women entrepreneurs
- Gender bias training for jury members conducted

PROGRAMME DELIVERY

Desired Outcome: Increase the number of women entrepreneurs / women-led ventures participating in and completing the programme

→ # of women entrepreneurs /women-led ventures completing the programme

Activities and outputs: Deliver a gender inclusive entrepreneur support programme

- Programme events and scheduling assessed & designed for accessibility for women entrepreneurs
- # and % of female mentors
- # Mentors trained on gender bias and inclusion
- # of programme services/events specifically addressing the needs of women entrepreneurs implemented (e.g. support interventions such as negotiation trainings, community building events such as peer session for female participants, etc)
- # of networking events specifically addressing the needs women entrepreneurs implemented
- # and % of women investors/jury members at the demo day
- # investors/jury members trained on gender bias and inclusion
- Gender lens training offered to all entrepreneurs as part of the programme curriculum
- # of women entrepreneurs /women-led ventures participating per programme activity
- Disaggregate and analyse programme participant data by gender
- Evaluate participant data by gender

Desired Outcome: Increase the overall visibility, credibility, and representation of women entrepreneurs

→ Participants of both genders are equally represented in media and communication opportunities

Activities and outputs: Gender inclusive media and communications

- # and % of women entrepreneurs highlighted through (online) storytelling (social media, print media, etc.)
- # and % of women entrepreneurs referred to journalists and media outlets
- # and % of women entrepreneurs highlighted in programme communication materials (website, printed materials, etc)

Youth entrepreneurs

Best practice indicators

PROMOTION, APPLICATION, SELECTION

Desired Outcome: Promising and committed youth entrepreneurs apply to the programme

- # of youth entrepreneurs applying to the programme
- Applicants meet the basic recruitment profile

Activities and outputs: Implement a tailored and inclusive application process

- Application form designed for accessibility of youth entrepreneurs
- Application process and communication designed for accessibility of youth entrepreneurs
- # of partner organizations engaged in the promotion of the programme
- # of promotion events for youth entrepreneurs

Desired Outcome: Promising and committed youth entrepreneurs get selected to the programme

- # of youth entrepreneurs selected to the programme
- Selected entrepreneurs fit the selection profile and programme criteria

Activities and outputs: Implement a tailored and inclusive selection process

- Selection profile and criteria designed for accessibility for youth entrepreneurs (e.g. focus on potential and passion rather than polished business idea)
- Selection jury trained on the selection profile, bias, and inclusion of youth entrepreneurs
- Selection jury includes seasoned youth entrepreneurs

PPROGRAMME DELIVERY

Desired Outcome: Youth entrepreneurs successfully complete the programme, dropout rates are decreased

- # of youth entrepreneurs completing the programme
- # of youth entrepreneurs dropping out of the programme

Activities and outputs: Deliver an inclusive youth entrepreneur support programme

- # of trainings/workshops addressing the needs of youth entrepreneurs implemented (e.g. business skills, life skills such as non-violent communication)
- # of networking events and opportunities for youth entrepreneurs implemented
- # of access to market opportunities implemented for youth entrepreneurs (e.g. attendance of trade shows)
- Access to capital:
 - # of trainings/workshops on financial literacy, financial management, and responsible access to capital
 - # of access to capital opportunities for youth entrepreneurs (e.g. demo day, help with setting up crowdfunding campaigns)
 - # of investors/jury members trained on youth entrepreneurship and finance
 - # of youth entrepreneurs participating per programme activity

Desired Outcome: Increase the overall visibility, credibility, and representation of youth entrepreneurs

- # of youth entrepreneurs highlighted through (online) storytelling (social media, print media, etc.)
- # of youth entrepreneurs referred to journalists and media outlets

Senior entrepreneurs Best practice indicators

PROMOTION, APPLICATION, SELECTION

Desired Outcome: Senior entrepreneurs apply to the programme

- # of (aspiring) senior entrepreneurs applying to the programme
- Applicants meet the basic recruitment profile

Activities and outputs: Implement a tailored and inclusive application process

- Application form designed for accessibility of senior entrepreneurs
- Application process designed for accessibility of senior entrepreneurs
- Communication and promotion materials include senior role models and are designed for inclusion of senior entrepreneurs
- # of partner organizations engaged in the promotion of the programme
- # of offline promotion events for senior entrepreneurs

Desired Outcome: (aspiring) Senior entrepreneurs get selected to the programme

- # of senior entrepreneurs selected to the programme
- Selected entrepreneurs fit the selection profile (e.g. real interest in starting a business) and programme criteria

Activities and outputs: Implement a tailored and inclusive selection process

- Selection profile and criteria designed for accessibility for senior entrepreneurs
- Selection jury trained on the selection profile, bias, and inclusion of senior entrepreneurs
- Selection jury includes seasoned senior entrepreneurs

PROGRAMME DELIVERY

Desired Outcome: Senior entrepreneurs successfully complete the programme, dropout rates are decreased

- # of senior entrepreneurs completing the programme
- # of senior entrepreneurs dropping out of the programme

Activities and outputs: Deliver an inclusive senior entrepreneur support programme

- # of trainings/workshops addressing the needs of senior entrepreneurs implemented (e.g. business skills, transversal skills, digital skills)
- # of inspirational and community building events
- # of networking events and opportunities for senior entrepreneurs implemented
- average hours of coaching or mentoring provided to programme participants
- # of senior specialists and/or senior entrepreneur role models engaged in the programme (e.g. as advisors, trainers, etc)
- # of access to capital opportunities and advisory for senior entrepreneurs
- # of senior entrepreneurs participating per programme activity

Desired Outcome: Increase the overall visibility, credibility, and representation of senior entrepreneurs

- # of senior entrepreneurs highlighted through (online) storytelling (social media, print media, etc.)
- # of senior entrepreneurs referred to journalists and media outlets

Migrant and refugee entrepreneurs

Best practice indicators

PROMOTION, APPLICATION, SELECTION

MIGRANT/REFUGEE-LENS PROGRAMME

Desired Outcome: Increase the number of applications from migrant/refugee entrepreneurs

→ # of migrant/refugee entrepreneurs / migrant/refugee-led ventures applying to the programme

Activities and outputs: Implement a promotion and scouting process that is inclusive and representative of migrant/refugee entrepreneurs

- # of migrant/refugee role models highlighted in communication materials
- Communication and marketing materials reviewed for migrant/refugee inclusion (e.g. inclusive language, use of pronouns, etc.) and representation of migrants/refugees
- # of promotion events held specifically for migrant/refugee entrepreneurs
- # of outreach partners with connection to migrant/refugee entrepreneurs engaged in programme promotion

Activities and outputs: Implement an inclusive application process

- Application form tested for bias and accessibility for migrant/refugee entrepreneurs
- Application process and communication reviewed for inclusion and accessibility to migrant/refugee entrepreneurs
- # of migrant/refugee entrepreneurs invited to apply

Desired Outcome: Increase the number of migrant/refugee entrepreneurs selected

→ # of migrant/refugee entrepreneurs / migrant/refugee-led ventures selected to the programme

Activities and outputs: Implement a selection process that is inclusive of migrants/refugees

- # and % of migrants/refugees on the selection panel
- Selection profile and criteria tested and adapted to increase accessibility for migrant/refugee entrepreneurs
- Selection jury trained on the selection profile, bias, and inclusion of migrant/refugee entrepreneurs

MIGRANT/REFUGEE-ONLY PROGRAMMES

Desired Outcome: Promising migrant/refugee entrepreneurs apply to the programme

- # of migrant/refugee entrepreneurs applying to the programme
- Applicants meet the basic recruitment profile

Activities and outputs: Implement a tailored and inclusive application process

- Application form designed for accessibility of migrant/refugee entrepreneurs
- Application process and communication designed for accessibility of migrant/refugee entrepreneurs
- # of outreach partners with connection to migrant/refugee entrepreneurs engaged in programme promotion
- # of promotion events for migrant/refugee entrepreneurs

Desired Outcome: Promising migrant/refugee entrepreneurs get selected to the programme

- # of migrant/refugee entrepreneurs selected to the programme

Activities and outputs: Implement a tailored and inclusive selection process

- Selection profile and criteria designed for accessibility for migrant/refugee entrepreneurs
- Selection jury trained on the selection profile, bias, and inclusion of migrant/refugee entrepreneurs
- Selection jury includes seasoned migrant/refugee entrepreneurs: # and % of migrants/refugees on the selection panel

PROGRAMME DELIVERY

MIGRANT/REFUGEE-LENS PROGRAMMES (LATER STAGE)

Desired Outcome: Increase the number of migrant/refugee entrepreneurs / migrant/refugee-led ventures participating in and completing the programme

- # of migrant/refugee entrepreneurs / migrant/refugee-led ventures completing the programme

Activities and outputs: Deliver a migrant/refugee entrepreneur inclusive entrepreneur support programme

- # of seasoned migrant/refugee mentors
- # Mentors trained on bias and inclusion
- # of programme services/events specifically addressing the needs of migrant/refugee entrepreneurs implemented
- # of networking events specifically addressing the needs of migrant/refugee entrepreneurs implemented

- # of migrant/refugee investors/jury members at the demo day
- # investors/jury members trained on bias and inclusion
- # of migrant/refugee entrepreneurs / migrant/refugee-led ventures participating per programme activity

Desired Outcome: Increase the overall visibility, credibility, and representation of migrant/refugee entrepreneurs

- Migrant/refugee entrepreneurs are represented in media and communication opportunities

Activities and outputs: Inclusive media and communications

- # Migrant/refugee entrepreneurs highlighted through (online) storytelling (social media, print media, etc.)
- # Migrant/refugee entrepreneurs referred to journalists and media outlets
- # Migrant/refugee entrepreneurs highlighted in programme communication materials (website, printed materials, etc)

MIGRANT/REFUGEE-ONLY PROGRAMMES (EARLY STAGE)

Desired Outcome: Migrant/refugee entrepreneurs successfully complete the programme

- # of migrant/refugee entrepreneurs completing the programme

Activities and outputs: Deliver a tailored migrant/refugee entrepreneur support programme

- # training/workshops addressing the needs of migrant/refugee entrepreneurs implemented (e.g. business planning, accounting and financial management, local market context, customer personas and customer acquisition, soft skills such as negotiation, networking, etc.)
- # of networking opportunities for entrepreneurs
- # of new contacts created (with mentors, peers, support organizations, etc.)
- # of startup opportunities shared with migrant/refugee entrepreneurs and support in accessing opportunities provided by the programme
- Access to capital:
 - # of trainings/workshops/consultancies on financial literacy, financial management, traditional and alternative startup financing instruments, preparation for investor/lender meetings
 - # of access to capital opportunities for entrepreneurs (e.g. demo day)
 - # of investors/jury members trained on migrant/refugee entrepreneurship and finance
 - # of access to market opportunities implemented for migrant/refugee entrepreneurs (e.g. attendance of trade shows)
- support available in multiple languages
- # of migrant/refugee entrepreneurs participating per programme activity

Desired Outcome: Increase the overall visibility, credibility, and representation of migrant/refugee entrepreneurs

→ Migrant/refugee entrepreneurs are represented in media and communication opportunities

Activities and outputs: Inclusive media and communications

→ # Migrant/refugee entrepreneurs highlighted through (online) storytelling (social media, print media, etc.)

→ # Migrant/refugee entrepreneurs referred to journalists and media outlets

Entrepreneurs with disabilities

Best practice indicators

PROMOTION, APPLICATION, SELECTION

DISABILITY-LENS PROGRAMMES

Desired Outcome: Increase the number of applications from entrepreneurs with disabilities

→ # of entrepreneurs with disabilities applying to the programme

Activities and outputs: Implement a promotion and scouting process that is inclusive and representative of entrepreneurs with disabilities

→ # of role models with disabilities highlighted in communication materials

→ Communication and marketing materials reviewed for inclusion of people with disabilities and representation of entrepreneurs with disabilities

→ # of promotion events held specifically for entrepreneurs with disabilities

→ # of outreach partners with connection to people with disabilities engaged in programme promotion

Activities and outputs: Implement an inclusive application process

→ Application form tested for bias and accessibility for entrepreneurs with disabilities

→ Application process and communication reviewed for inclusion and accessibility for entrepreneurs with disabilities

→ # of entrepreneurs with disabilities invited to apply

Desired Outcome: Increase the number of entrepreneurs with disabilities selected

→ # of entrepreneurs with disabilities selected to the programme

Activities and outputs: Implement a selection process that is inclusive of entrepreneurs with disabilities

→ # and % of people with disabilities on the selection panel

→ Selection profile and criteria tested and adapted to increase accessibility for entrepreneurs with disabilities

→ Selection jury trained on the selection profile, bias, and inclusion of entrepreneurs with disabilities

PROGRAMMES FOR ENTREPRENEURS WITH DISABILITIES ONLY

Desired Outcome: Promising entrepreneurs with disabilities apply to the programme

→ # of entrepreneurs with disabilities applying to the programme

→ Applicants meet the basic recruitment profile

Activities and outputs: Implement a tailored and inclusive application process

→ Application form designed for accessibility of entrepreneurs with disabilities

→ Application process and communication designed for accessibility of entrepreneurs with disabilities

→ # of outreach partners with connection to people with disabilities engaged in programme promotion

→ # of promotion events for entrepreneurs with disabilities

Desired Outcome: Promising entrepreneurs with disabilities get selected to the programme

→ # of entrepreneurs with disabilities selected to the programme

Activities and outputs: Implement a tailored and inclusive selection process

→ Selection profile and criteria designed for accessibility for entrepreneurs with disabilities

→ Selection jury trained on the selection profile, bias, and inclusion of entrepreneurs with disabilities

→ Selection jury includes seasoned entrepreneurs with disabilities: # and % of people with disabilities on the selection panel

PROGRAMME DELIVERY

DISABILITY-LENS PROGRAMMES (LATER STAGE)

Desired Outcome: Increase the number of entrepreneurs with disabilities participating in and completing the programme

→ # of entrepreneurs with disabilities completing the programme

Activities and outputs: Deliver an entrepreneur support programme that is inclusive of entrepreneurs with disabilities

- # of seasoned entrepreneurs with disabilities included as mentors
- # Mentors trained on bias and inclusion
- # of programme services/events specifically addressing the needs of entrepreneurs with disabilities implemented
- # of investors/jury members with disabilities at the demo day
- # investors/jury members trained on bias and inclusion
- # of entrepreneurs with disabilities participating per programme activity

Desired Outcome: Increase the overall visibility, credibility, and representation of entrepreneurs with disabilities

- entrepreneurs with disabilities are represented in media and communication opportunities

Activities and outputs: Inclusive media and communications

- # of entrepreneurs with disabilities highlighted through (online) storytelling (social media, print media, etc.)
- # of entrepreneurs with disabilities referred to journalists and media outlets
- # of entrepreneurs with disabilities highlighted in programme communication materials (website, printed materials, etc)

PROGRAMMES FOR ENTREPRENEURS WITH DISABILITIES ONLY (EARLY STAGE)

Desired Outcome: Entrepreneurs with disabilities successfully complete the programme

- # of entrepreneurs with disabilities completing the programme

Activities and outputs: Deliver a tailored support programme for entrepreneurs with disabilities

- # training/workshops addressing the needs of entrepreneurs with disabilities implemented (e.g. business, entrepreneurship, and employment skills, including technical/digital and soft skills; focus on increasing social support, provide education on benefits and risks of self-employment/entrepreneurship)
- Access to capital:
- # of trainings/workshops/consultancies on financial literacy, (personal) financial management, traditional and alternative startup financing instruments, preparation for investor/lender meetings
- # of access to capital opportunities for entrepreneurs (e.g. demo day)
- # of investors/jury members with disabilities at the demo day
- # investors/jury members trained on bias and inclusion
- # of seasoned entrepreneurs with disabilities included as mentors
- # Mentors trained on bias and inclusion
- # of entrepreneurs with disabilities participating per programme activity

Desired Outcome: Increase the overall visibility, credibility, and representation of entrepreneurs with disabilities

→ Entrepreneurs with disabilities are represented in media and communication opportunities

Activities and outputs: Inclusive media and communications

→ # of entrepreneurs with disabilities highlighted through (online) storytelling (social media, print media, etc.)

→ # of entrepreneurs with disabilities referred to journalists and media outlets



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