

Authors:
Giulia Martinelli
Daniela Bolzani
Department of Management, University of Bologna

INCUBATORS' TRAINING NEEDS TO SERVE MIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS.

DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT RESEARCH REPORT

MIG.EN.CUBE

Fostering MIGrant ENTrepreneurship inCUBation in Europe



Summary report for Intellectual Output 2 - Training Needs Assessment

Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership for Adult Education
2020-1-IT02-KA204-080069



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Executive summary	3
	1. Background. Migrant Entrepreneurship in Europe	4
	2. Methodology	7
	2.1 Desk research	7
	2.2 Qualitative research	7
	2.3 Quantitative research	10
	3. Descriptive statistics	11
	3.1 Incubation programs and services	11
	3.2 Training contents and methods	12
	3.3 Incubators' staff training	13
	4. Qualitative findings	16
	4.1 Perceived differences between native and migrant entrepreneurs	16
	4.2 The role of incubators ("what" incubators do)	18
	4.2.1 Incubators as entrepreneurial knowledge intermediaries	19
	4.2.2 Incubators as network intermediaries	20
	4.2.3 Incubators as developers	21
	4.3 The approach of incubators ("how" incubators do what they do)	22
	4.3.1 Competences of incubation professionals	22
	4.3.2 Building relationships	24
	4.4 The sources of knowledge for incubation professionals	26
	4.4.1 Internal staffing and training	26
	4.4.2 Learning-by-doing	27
	4.4.3 External sourcing	28
	5. Quantitative findings	29
	5.1 Structure, programs and activities of surveyed incubators	29
	5.2 Competences and training needs at surveyed incubators	34
	6. Discussion and recommendations	38
	6.1 Summary of findings	40
	6.2 Recommendations for incubation managers and professionals	41
	6.2.1 Training	41
	6.2.2 Raising awareness	41
	6.2.3 Migrants' inclusion	42
	6.3 Recommendations for policymakers	42
	6.3.1 Sensitivity	43
	6.3.2 Collaboration among the different actors	43
	6.3.3 Increased participation of migrants	43
	7. References	44

Summary report prepared with the contribution of Fondazione Grameen Italia (Giulia Maselli), Institut Supérieur de Gestion (Rosana Reis), PLACE Network (Shawgi Ahmed, Michele Caleffi), University of Amsterdam (Ornella Lupoi, Saskia Buenfil, Vittoria Scalerà), Impact Hub Amsterdam (Rutger de Rijk), Migration Policy Group (Giacomo Solano, Olivia Long), Impact Hub GmbH (Marina Sarli).

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Research report on incubators' training needs to serve migrant entrepreneurs © 2021 by Giulia Martinelli, Daniela Bolzani is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of the MIG.EN.CUBE project is to enhance the knowledge and competences of incubation professionals (potentially) dealing with migrant entrepreneurs across Europe, since this is a target group with specific needs and challenges that go beyond those experienced by native entrepreneurs. According to available literature, incubators targeting migrant entrepreneurs should take into account the specific needs of this group of individuals and build programs that offer not only technical and business support, but also involve cultural, psychological, and practical support to mitigate the difficulties of living and doing business in a foreign country (e.g., Rath & Swagerman, 2016; Solano et al., 2019). To do so, incubation professionals should be understand the specific training needs of migrant entrepreneurs, and eventually revise their knowledge, attitudes, and skills. In this report, we present evidence about what incubators do (i.e., their role, services and activities), how incubators approach entrepreneurs (i.e., their competences and their relational approach), and how do incubators source their knowledge and competences. We emphasize any perceived difference between migrant and native entrepreneurs, and we draw a comparison between generalist incubators and migrant-specific incubators across France, Italy, and The Netherlands. The goal of the report is then to present evidence about the training needs of incubation professionals (potentially) dealing with (aspiring) migrant entrepreneurs.

This is a Summary Report coordinated by the University of Bologna (UNIBO), which builds on three Country Reports developed by the Institut Supérieur de Gestion (ISG) (for France), the University of Amsterdam (UvA) (for The Netherlands), and UNIBO (for Italy). The report is however a collaborative effort between the academic and non-academic partners of the MIG.EN.CUBE project. In particular, universities were in charge of collecting qualitative and quantitative data, incubators and policy-advising partners were in charge of providing access to the field and to guide the scientific efforts towards relevant issues for practice and policy.

The methodology for data collection implied a first stage of secondary data collection to identify the existing migrant-specific incubation programs and a comparative sample of generalist incubation services. The research teams of ISG, UNIBO and UvA implemented then a qualitative data collection (in-depth interviews with 48 incubators). Subsequently, UNIBO developed and distributed an online survey, which recorded 105 completed responses. This Summary Report is the key deliverable for MIG.EN.CUBE Intellectual Output #2 – Training Needs Assessment. Together with the other reports produced in the first phase of research and assessment, especially the Summary Research Report on Incubation Services for Migrant Entrepreneurship (coordinated by the University of Amsterdam), this report is key to produce the MOOC and the Inclusive Guidebook that will be piloted and disseminated by MIG.EN.CUBE to train professionals in the domain of inclusive incubation for migrants.

The report will first compare the current migration and entrepreneurship trends in France, Italy, and the Netherlands (Section 1). It will then describe the methodological approach to develop this study and provide an overview of the sample (Section 2). A descriptive section will present key statistics about the training practices carried out at the interviewed incubators (Section 3), followed by an analysis of the qualitative outcomes of the interviews (Section 4) and quantitative results of the survey (Section 5). Lastly, the report discusses the findings, providing managerial and policy recommendations (Section 6).

1. BACKGROUND. MIGRANT ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN EUROPE

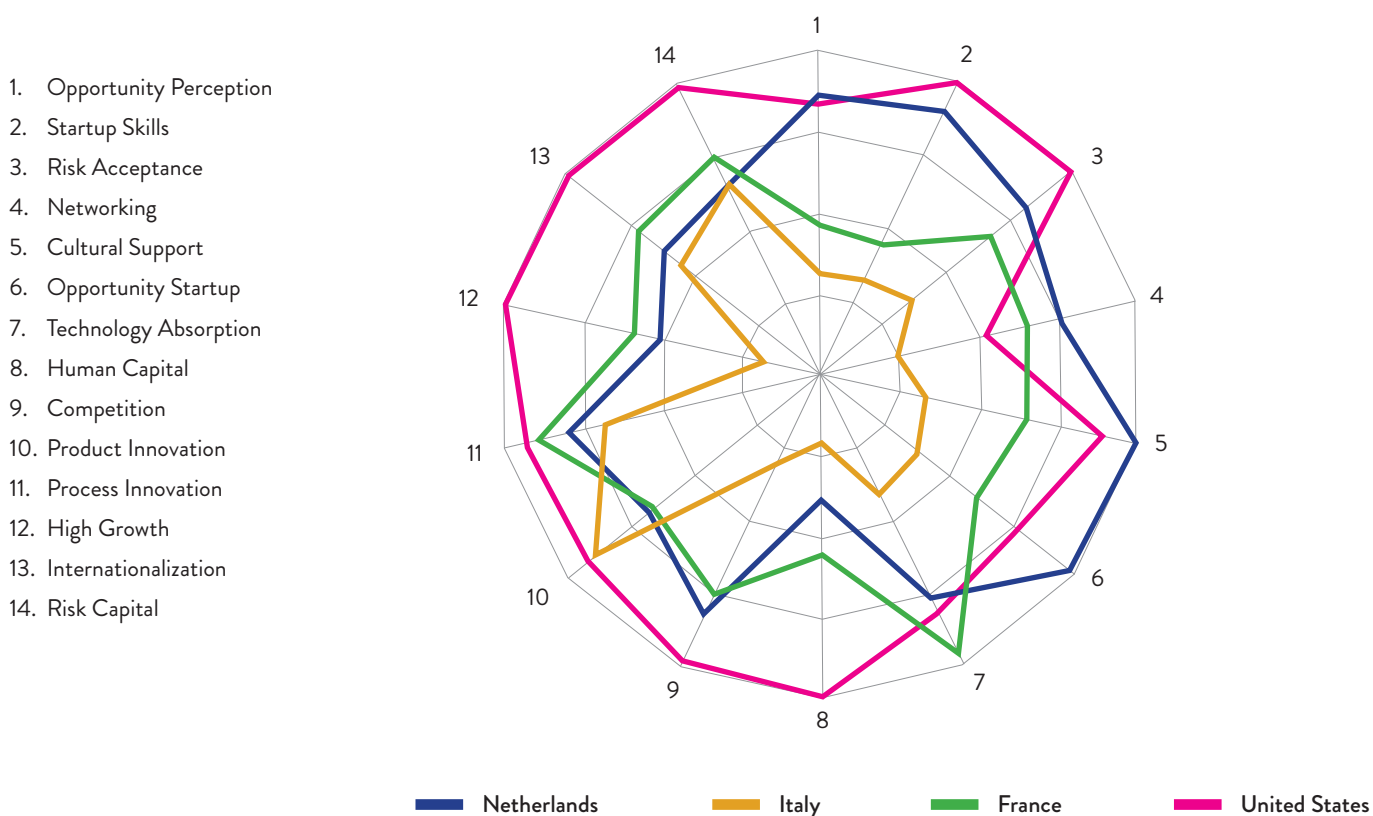
Europe has been for centuries a central player in global migration and maintains this role nowadays (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020). Different European countries experimented different immigration flows, which have changed throughout the time. Looking at the three countries involved in the MIG.EN.CUBE project, for example, differences in the migration histories among the three countries were determined by the direction of “internal” European flows (e.g., South-Europeans workers’ migrations towards France and The Netherlands between the 1950s and the 1970s) and prior colonial ties to specific countries (King et al., 2000). In each country, different approaches have been developed towards migrants’ citizenship and inclusion – for instance in France through political inclusion via granting citizenship; in The Netherlands through a multicultural approach defending ethnic differences while setting up a legal framework designed to guarantee immigrants inclusion in the political community; and in Italy with emergency- and counter-illegality migration policy orientations (Bonifazi, 2000).

These three countries also display different ecosystems for innovation and entrepreneurship, even if governments have recently employed several policies to foster them. For instance, according to the Global Entrepreneurship Index developed by the Global Entrepreneurship and Development Institute¹, the United States rank first in the list of countries in terms of its entrepreneurial ecosystem, based on the evaluation of 14 “pillars” (Figure 1) regarding entrepreneurial attitudes, abilities, and aspirations of the local population, weighted against the prevailing social and economic “infrastructure” (e.g., broadband connectivity, transport links to external markets). France ranks 10th, the Netherlands rank 11th (after countries such as the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Australia) and Italy ranks 42nd (after countries including Israel, Poland and Tunisia). Whereas the three countries present similar high performances in terms of product and process innovation, internationalization and risk capital, they present substantial divergencies across other domains, such as opportunity perceptions, opportunity startup, startup skills, risk acceptance, or cultural support.

Across the three countries, migrants have started to take a relevant part in new firm creation. According to some recent statistics, migrants represented around 15% of entrepreneurs in Paris and across France (Entreprendre, 2021; Atelier Parisien D’Urbanisme, 2016). In Italy, the number of firms founded by migrant entrepreneurs

¹The GEDI Institute (<https://thegedi.org/>) is an entrepreneurship development institute and research organization that advances knowledge on links between entrepreneurship, economic development, and prosperity. The institute was founded by world-leading entrepreneurship scholars from the LSE, George Mason University, University of Pécs, and Imperial College London. The GEI index offers a breakthrough in measuring the quality and dynamics of entrepreneurship ecosystems at a national, regional, and local level. Rigorous academic peer reviews had validated the GEI index methodology. It has been widely reported in media, including The Economist, The Wall Street Journal, Financial Times, and Forbes. The European Commission has also endorsed the methodology and has been using it to inform the allocation of EU Structural and Cohesion Funds.

FIGURE 1. COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW OF THE FRENCH, ITALIAN, AND DUTCH ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS



Source: The GEDI Institute (<https://thegedi.org/>), 20 September 2021

equals around 600,000 firms, representing 9.6% of the firms in the country (Unioncamere, 2018). The number in the Netherlands is slightly higher, where 16% of the 1.2 million Dutch entrepreneurs have an immigrant background (Instituut Voor Multiculturele Vraagstukken, 2020). As shown in Table 1, the three countries present a lower proportion of migrant entrepreneurs born in another European member state if compared to the EU average. Looking at migrant entrepreneurs born outside the EU, only Italy presents lower percentages with respect to the EU average: the migrants in the country seem to be more attracted by waged employment opportunities.

TABLE 1. SHARE OF IMMIGRANTS AMONG THE SELF-EMPLOYED AND EMPLOYEES (15-64 YEARS OLD), 2018

	Self-employed born in another EU Member State	Self-employed born outside of the EU	Employees born in another country (EU or non-EU)
Italy	2.7	6.8	15.8
Netherlands	3.5	8.4	11.2
France	3.9	8.6	11.9
European Union	4.4	7.3	13.3

Source: OECD, 2019

Migrant entrepreneurs have entered different sectors of the economy around Europe, even if they maintain a tendency to be more present in low-value added industries. While in France they are mostly involved in hospitality and agriculture (Ministère de l'Intérieur, 2020); in Italy they are mostly active in retail trade, specialized constructions and hospitality (Unioncamere, 2018); and in the Netherlands they are active in trade sector and in business and other services. Interestingly, there seems to be a shift between generations of migrant entrepreneurs. Industry diversification is increasing, and second-generation migrants focus more on high-value sectors (e.g., Instituut voor Multiculturele Vraagstukken, 2014; Bolzani & Boari, 2018). The number of migrant entrepreneurs in high-tech, innovative industries is increasing in all the three countries, also thanks to the active policies implemented by the three national governments to attracting innovative startups and high-tech entrepreneurs from third countries (Bolzani, 2021). Since 2015, the Netherlands has been issuing a temporary residence permit for start-up founders and innovative entrepreneurs from countries outside the European Union, through a selective qualification process brought forward by certified incubators (Start-up Delta, renamed Techleap since 2019). In 2018, 127 applications for start-up visas were recorded. Similarly, the Italian Minister of Economic Development facilitates a fast-track start-up visa scheme to non-EU citizens who wish to establish, individually or in a team, an innovative start-up company in Italy (Italy Startup Visa). In 2015-2018, the French Government created the “French Tech Ticket” to attract entrepreneurs from all around the world having ideas for technology-based, high-growth companies.

2. METHODOLOGY

The findings presented in this study are based on a three-pronged research design, as described in the following paragraphs.

2.1 Desk research

The first approach to data collection was based on desk research to identify the existing migrant-specific incubation services for each country, together with a comparative sample of generalist incubators. This involved efforts by all the MIG.EN.CUBE partners: MIGPOL and IHCOMP, providing insights across the three countries; coordinated action by FGRAM and UNIBO for Italy; PLACE and ISG for France; and IHUB and UvA for the Netherlands. This was the first phase of data collection, and therefore such a desk research had the primary goal to gather descriptive data on the incubators: the year of foundation, the business model they follow, the main goal, the services they provide, and the target groups.

2.2 Qualitative research

The second approach to the research was based on qualitative methods. First, the partner universities organized a focus group with the other project partners to collect their insights on the key challenges and opportunities in the domain of migrant incubation, an overview of existing practices and gaps, and the current state of incubation professionals' training in this field. Next, the teams of ISG, UNIBO and UvA implemented country-level data collections, reaching a total of 48 incubators for in-depth interviews. To complement the interviews with incubation professionals, the teams of the three universities identified, with the support of incubators and project partners, more than 10 migrant and non-migrant entrepreneurs who were participating to incubation activities, with the goal of understanding their point of view about benefits from the experience, but also barriers and challenges encountered.

For the sake of comparative analyses, in the following tables, the incubators identified as "MIG" (abbreviation for "migrant") are focused on serving exclusively migrant entrepreneurs. Instead, those identified as "GEN" (abbreviation for "generalist"), welcome in their programs both local residents as well as entrepreneurs coming from abroad, regardless of their legal status. To ensure anonymity, the names of incubators are not disclosed in this report but replaced with a code.

In France, the identified migrant-focused and general incubators were contacted, first via email and then by phone, to obtain contact information to ask participation in the study. Of these incubators, 16 were interviewed to collect in-depth information, which were chosen among the most interesting ones for this study. The semi-structured interviews were conducted online in English and French through Microsoft Teams. With the consent of the participants, the interviews, lasting an average of 60 minutes, were recorded and transcribed in full. The respondents are mainly French (14 out of 16), with one coming from Canada and another one from Spain. The sample is composed of seven men and nine women, of whom 14 are managers and two are CEO. Table 2 provides an overview of the interviewed incubators in France.

TABLE 2. OVERVIEW OF FRENCH INTERVIEWED INCUBATORS

Anonymous incubator's name	Foundation Year	Location area	Industry	Legal status	Number of full-time employees
FRAMIG#01	2001	Île-de-France	General	Private	10
FRAMIG#02	2018	Île-de-France	Funding	Private	2
FRAMIG#03	1969	Île-de-France	Informal economy	Private	10
FRAMIG#04	2008	Île-de-France	General *	Private	20
FRAMIG#05	2010	Île-de-France	Social and environmental impact	Private	70
FRAMIG#06	2012	Île-de-France	Social	Private	5
FRAGEN#01	2006	Hauts-de-France	Generalist incubator with digital focus	Private	5
FRAGEN#02	2009	Île-de-France	General (B2B)	Mixed	10
FRAGEN#03	2017	Île-de-France	Hardware/software (B2B)	Private	4
FRAGEN#04	1987	Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur	General	Private	15
FRAGEN#05	2013	Île-de-France	General	Private	15
FRAGEN#06	2020	Île-de-France	Technology in manufacturing	Mixed	8
FRAGEN#07	2020	Centre-Val de Loire	General	Public	4
FRAGEN#08	2016	Île-de-France	Digital skills (formation)	Private	18
FRAGEN#09	2000	Normandie	General	Private	15
FRAGEN#10	2012	Île-de-France	General	Private	20

Source: Primary data

The mapping of incubation services offered in The Netherlands was carried out by IHUB, MIGPOL, IHCOMP and UvA. The non-academic partners focused on incubators targeting migrant entrepreneurs, whereas UvA focused on identifying generic incubation services using publicly available lists available by the Dutch Incubator Association (DIA)² and StartupAmsterdam³. Of the mapped incubators, 12 were interviewed to collect in-depth information. These providers were selected by Impact Hub Amsterdam and the UvA team based on different incubator types to gain as many insights and points of view as possible. The UvA reached out to several Dutch incubators' representatives to organize the interviews. The interviews occurred in two rounds. The first round consisted of a pre-interview survey to gather basic information about the organizations and to reduce the interview time. The second round consisted of in-depth structured interviews: these were scheduled for 60 minutes and were carried out through online meetings. With the consent of the participants, the interviews were recorded and transcribed in full. It should be noted that all the incubators welcome migrant entrepreneurs in their programs. Table 3 provides an overview about the main characteristics of Dutch interviewed incubators. The respondents are composed of four men and eight women, covering key functional roles such as director, founder, program manager, head of product development. Nine of the interviewees were Dutch by origin.

² Dutch association whose main goal is to provide Dutch incubators a common platform to encourage the professionalization of incubation practices in the Netherlands (<https://www.dutchincubator.nl/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/Research-on-Business-Processes-of-Dutch-Incubators.pdf>)

³ StartupAmsterdam is a public initiative assisting with capital, talent and local resources to put Amsterdam on the global map of global startups (<https://www.iamsterdam.com/en/business/startup-amsterdam/hubs/accelerators-and-incubators>).

TABLE 3. OVERVIEW OF DUTCH INTERVIEWED INCUBATORS

Anonymous incubator's name	Foundation Year	Location area	Industry	Legal status	Number of full-time employees
NLMIG#1	2015	Noord-Holland	General	Private	0-5
NLMIG#2	2017	Noord-Holland, Zuid-Holland	General	Public	5-10
NLMIG#3	2016	Noord-Holland	Creative	Private	10-20
NLGEN#1	2016	Utrecht	General	Public	0-5
NLGEN#2	2013	Zuid-Holland	General	Private	0-5
NLGEN#3	2015	Noord-Holland	Food	Private	0-5
NLGEN#4	2020	Noord-Holland	General	Mixed	0-5
NLGEN#5	2014	Netherlands	General	Private	0-5
NLGEN#6	2011	Noord-Holland	Tech	Private	20-30
NLGEN#7	2005	Zuid-Holland	Tech	Public	20-30
NLGEN#8	2012	Noord-Holland	Tech	Private	0-5
NLGEN#9	2016	Noord-Holland	General	Private	10-20

Source: Primary data

In Italy, FGRAM mapped the Italian population of migrant-specific incubator, whereas UNIBO mapped key generalist incubators (identified from the list of the Italian Certified incubators released by Italian Ministry of the Economic Development). Among the mapped incubators, 20 were interviewed.

Table 4 summarizes the list of interviewed organizations. The sample covers the Italian territory and targets migrant and non-migrant incubators. Respondents were asked to fill in a pre-interview survey to collect general data and were then interviewed following a semi-structured interview format. The interviews were held on online platforms between April and May 2021 and had an average duration of 60 minutes. The interviewees were managers, heads of business services, and CEOs, generally one person per organization, with the exception of 4 cases. Overall, 24 people were interviewed. All the interviewees were Italian natives, with 54% of them being males.

TABLE 4. OVERVIEW OF ITALIAN INTERVIEWED INCUBATORS

Anonymous incubator's name	Foundation Year	Location area	Industry	Legal status	Number of full-time employees
ITAMIG#1	2003	North and South Italy	Social Impact	Public	0-5
ITAMIG#2	2019	North Italy	Social Impact, Creative	Mixed	0-5
ITAMIG#3	2011	South Italy	Social Impact, Creative	Private	10-20
ITAMIG#4	2019	North Italy	Other	Private	10-20
ITAMIG#5	2018	North Italy	General	Mixed	0-5
ITAMIG#6	1991	Center Italy	Social Impact, Creative	Public	5-10
ITAGEN#1	2014	South Italy	Tech	Private	0-5
ITAGEN#2	2011	North Italy	Social Impact	Private	5-10
ITAGEN#3	2016	South Italy	General	Private	0-5
ITAGEN#4	2020	North Italy	General	Mixed	0-5
ITAGEN#5	2003	North, Center, South and Islands of Italy	Tech	Private	10-20
ITAGEN#6	2020	North Italy	Tech	Private	0-5
ITAGEN#7	2015	North Italy	Biotech/healthcare, Other	Private	5-10
ITAGEN#8	2005	North and South Italy	Other	Private	0-5
ITAGEN#9	2016	North Italy	General	Private	10-20
ITAGEN#10	2006	North Italy	High Tech, Biotech/healthcare, public sector, Cultural/creative	Public	0-5
ITAGEN#11	1991	Center Italy	Biotech/healthcare, Cultural/creative, Other	Mixed	30-50
ITAGEN#12	2013	Center Italy	General	Private	5-10
ITAGEN#13	2015	North Italy	Social impact	Private	10-20
ITAGEN#14	2016	North Italy	High Tech, Sport	Private	0-5

Source: Primary data

2.3 Quantitative research

The third approach to the research was quantitative: an online survey was developed, under the coordination of the UNIBO research team and with the collaboration and testing by all the other partners, to collect information about the competences and training needs of incubation professionals. The survey was implemented and distributed by UNIBO via Qualtrics⁴ in Italian, French and English, and was sent to the mapped incubators in Italy, France, and the Netherlands. Both academic and non-academic project partners collaborated to circulate the invitation to take the survey to their networks and partners. The survey was fully completed by 105 respondents across France (n=20), Italy (n=50), The Netherlands (n=19), and other European countries (e.g., Spain, Hungary, Poland, and others, n=16).

⁴Qualtrics is a web-based survey tool to conduct survey research, evaluations and other data collection activities: <https://www.qualtrics.com/>

3. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

3.1 Incubation programs and services

Overall, the samples of incubators in Italy, France and the Netherlands present a similar provision of services regardless the target, even with some differences. The most widely offered service is the provision of coaching and training activities, whereas the support in search of staff is the least offered service. Whereas the provision of incubation spaces are relevant services in France and Italy, they are less important in the Netherlands. Contrarily, Dutch incubators seem more oriented towards the provision of support to reach clients and final markets with respect to Italian and French incubators. Table 5 reports the percentages of services delivered by incubators across the three countries.

TABLE 5. OVERVIEW OF SERVICES PROVIDED BY SAMPLED INCUBATORS

Type of service	France	Italy	The Netherlands
Support in search of staff	20%	20%	33%
Support in search of entrepreneurial team's members	20%	30%	17%
Provision of support to reach clients and final markets	56%	40%	75%
Provision of incubation spaces (e.g., office, labs)	63%	65%	25%
Funding or investment in the incubated firms	69%	55%	17%
Provision of mentorship/coaching	75%	90%	100%
Provision of experts and trainers	75%	85%	100%

Source: Primary data

The services offered could be part of a program or can be accessed on a choose-and-pick basis, as summarized in Table 6.

In France, the only relevant difference identified between migrant-focused and generalist incubators is that generalists tend to offer more individualized coaching than collective training, which is instead favored in migrant-focused incubators. Incubators offer a classic program annually; similarly to the Netherlands, there are some exceptions among the migrant-specific incubators that adapt the contents according to the context, mainly aiming to meet the needs of the participants.

In Italy, 70% of incubators of the sample offer different programs every year and 30% has a recurring program. Incubators offering different programs every year are either driven by European, national or regional projects, by corporate and/or partners and affiliates' requests, or have open innovation programs. Such dynamic is stronger for migrant-specific incubators: 83% of them offer new programs on a yearly basis compared to 65% of generalist incubators.

Dutch incubators differ in terms of the number and types of programs that they offer on an annual basis. Among those interviewed, half of them adapts their programs based on factors like demand or sponsors, 34% has a classic program that is repeated every year, 8% offers two different programs every year, and another 8% adapts the program to the training needs of participants. The majority of the interviewed migrant-specific incubators (67%), however, has one classic program that is repeated every year.

TABLE 6. FREQUENCY OF INCUBATION PROGRAMS IN THE SAMPLED INCUBATORS

	France	Italy	The Netherlands
One classic program that is repeated every year	25%	30%	34%
Different programs every year, depending on sponsors/ market demand	19%	70%	50%
Other: Two different programs, twice a year	13%	-	8%
Other: Generic program adjusted to the training needs of the participants	43%	-	8%

Source: Primary data

3.2 Training contents and methods

With respect to the training and mentoring contents, incubators generally provide a basic set of modules linked to entrepreneurship and methodologies for entrepreneurship, self-employment, project management, strategy, accounting, financial planning, market planning, marketing communication, negotiation, and human resources. These contents are then adapted to the needs of the cohort or of the single entrepreneur. In Italy, migrant-specific incubators provide training and tutoring also about how to start a business, the legal company forms, and the different types of access to credit and finance.

Instructors are either internal or external, depending on the size of the incubator and the entrepreneurs' needs. In France, Italy and the Netherlands, both generalist and migrant-specific report that they turn to external consultants in the case of highly specific topics. In Italy, the different final purpose of the training modules between migrant-specific and mainstream incubators emerged clearly. The formers try to establish an entrepreneurial culture and mindset going beyond the start of a business; on the other hand, the latter “enables” and “facilitates” applicants' skills to provide them with tools and competencies that will be fundamental when they will end the program.

Covid-19 had an impact on training contents and methods. Specifically, the contents were revised towards digitalization, such as E-commerce development and digital marketing tools. The most visible effect, nonetheless, was on the format. Given the governmental restrictions and social distancing measures, during 2020 and 2021 incubators switched their training from in-presence to online activities. In Italy and in the Netherlands, before Covid-19 the majority of incubators used in-presence classes with mixed (internal/ external) instructors; during and after the pandemic they moved completely online with live classes held by a mix of instructors.

Italian incubators highlighted that the pandemic had an “expansionary” effect on their activities. In fact, the training methods before Covid-19 involved in-presence classes either at the incubator's premises or in rented facilities. With the pandemic, almost all the interviewed incubators switched to online delivery of training. According to some informants, this had the effect of ensuring a wider outreach (e.g., ITAMIG#1, ITA-MIG#3), due to more flexible temporal – spatial arrangements to attend the training sessions. Furthermore, mainstream incubators (e.g., ITAGEN#4, ITAGEN#13) reported that while before the pandemic the physical presence was a requirement to access the incubation/acceleration program, now they are becoming more flexible and comprehensive. The physical presence was in particular functional to the acceleration programs, in that entrepreneurial teams could be supported constantly by consultants and staff and grow faster. Moreover, it appeared to be a good method to test team stability and composition, as well as for incubators to experience new business and governance models.

Conversely, in France programs for migrants were suspended during the lockdown, leaving only a few online coaching sessions. The lockdown in France only lasted for a short period; thus, activities were suspended for a short time and could be resumed quickly. That is because migrants are perceived to be a difficult type of audience to work with online. That is, migrant-specific incubators prefer to adopt the training in person. There were some exceptions though: for example, FRAMIG#4 digitalized its entire program and worked 100% online during the lockdown. Also, FRAMIG#6 adapted almost all the programs to digital format and identified advantages and disadvantages in the process, such as the widening of the audience and connectivity issues, respectively. On the other hand, generalist incubators didn't find any problems with online activities. FRAGEN#1 has a remote program for specific entrepreneurs, while FRAGEN#6 accelerator, started its activities during the lockdown. According to them, as they deal with technology, they didn't find much difficulty with their clients. FRAGEN#6 and FRAGEN#9, which main activities are based on individual coaching, were not affected because they can be carried out very well also online.

3.3 Incubators' staff training

While incubators' staff should take part in training to improve their competences and skills and become more effective and efficient, our data surprisingly shown that across the three countries, the amount of formal staff training is rather low.

Despite under the French law, for employee's formation, the employer has the discretion to offer training to their employees, none of the interviewed incubators has a human resource policy that ensures the training and development for its employees. Table 7 summarizes data collected through interviews.

TABLE 7. STAFF TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN THE FRENCH SAMPLED INCUBATORS

Anonymous incubator's name	Specific budget for individual staff's training	Topic of training activities	% of staff engaging in training activities	Number of hours of training activities per year	Location of training
FRAMIG#01	No	Technical and soft skills	50 to 75%	10 to 50	Inside and outside
FRAMIG#02	No	Technical	50%	10 to 20	Outside
FRAMIG#03	No	No training	n/a	n/a	n/a
FRAMIG#04	Yes	Technical and soft skills	50 to 75%	10 to 50	Outside
FRAMIG#05	Yes	Technical and soft skills	50 to 75%	10 to 50	Inside and outside
FRAMIG#06	Yes	Technical and soft skills	50 to 75%	10 to 50	Outside
FRAGEN#01	Yes	Technical and soft skills	50 to 75%	10 to 50	Inside
FRAGEN#02	No	Soft skills	Up to 20%	Up to 10	Outside
FRAGEN#03	No	Technical	Up to 20%	Up to 10	Outside
FRAGEN#04	No	No training	n/a	n/a	n/a
FRAGEN#05	No	No training	n/a	n/a	n/a
FRAGEN#06	No	Business Development	50%	10 to 20	Outside
FRAGEN#07	No	Technical	Up to 20%	Up to 20	Inside
FRAGEN#08	No	No training	n/a	n/a	n/a
FRAGEN#09	Yes	Technical	Up to 20%	Up to 20	Inside
FRAGEN#10	No	No training	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: Primary data

In the Netherlands, 75% of the incubators does not have a yearly budget to be spent on training (Table 8). Of the incubators with a budget for training, 67% are migrant-specific incubators. Overall, among the Dutch sample, 25% of the incubation professional does not actively participate in yearly training. Dutch incubation professionals have a predilection to further develop technical skills: 80% of interviewed incubation professionals receive training on both technical and transversal/soft skills, 15% is trained on transversal/soft skills only and 5% on technical contents only. The hours devoted to staff training is on average between 10 and 50 yearly hours for generalist incubators and migrant-specific incubators.

TABLE 8. STAFF TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN THE DUTCH SAMPLED INCUBATORS

Anonymous incubator's name	Specific budget for individual staff's training	Topic of training activities	% of staff engaging in training activities	Number of hours of training activities per year	Location of training
NLMIG#1	No	Technical and transversal skills	50-75%	10-50 hours	Inside
NLMIG#2	Yes	Technical and transversal skills	>75%	More than 50 hours	Outside
NLMIG#3	Yes	Technical and transversal skills	Up to 20%	10-50 hours	Inside
NLGEN#1	No	Technical and transversal skills	0%	10-50 hours	Inside
NLGEN#2	No	No training	0%	-	-
NLGEN#3	No	No training	0%	-	-
NLGEN#4	No	Conferences and online courses	>75%	10-50 hours	Outside
NLGEN#5	No	Technical skills	20-50%	More than 50 hours	Outside
NLGEN#6	Yes	Up to the employees	Up to 20%	1-10 hours	Outside
NLGEN#7	No	Technical skills	Up to 20%	1-10 hours	Outside
NLGEN#8	No	Technical skills	>75%	10-50 hours	Inside
NLGEN#9	No	No training	Up to 20%	1-10 hours	Outside

Source: Primary data

In Italy, 55% of the interviewees has yearly budget for training; of them, 18% are migrant-specific incubators. However, some incubators specified that training requests of the staff are accommodated by the management even without a formal allocated budget. Among the Italian sample, 5% of the incubation professional does not actively participate in yearly training. In Italy, there is a prevalence of training on technical and transversal skills. The hours devoted to staff training varies, although the sampled incubators spend between 10 and 50 yearly hours to training. Table 9 provides a summary of these information.

TABLE 9. STAFF TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN THE ITALIAN SAMPLED INCUBATORS

Anonymous incubator's name	Specific budget for individual staff's training	Topic of training activities	% of staff engaging in training activities	Number of hours of training activities per year	Location of training
ITAMIG#1	Yes	Technical and transversal skills	1-20%	from 10 to 50	Inside and outside
ITAMIG#2	No	Transversal skills	50-75%	less than 10	Inside
ITAMIG#3	No	Technical and transversal skills	20-50%	more than 50	Inside and outside
ITAMIG#4	No	Technical and transversal skills	*	*	Inside and outside
ITAMIG#5	No	Technical skills	*	*	Inside
ITAMIG#6	Yes	Technical and transversal skills	>75%	from 10 to 50	Inside and outside
ITAGEN#1	No	Technical and transversal skills	>75%	from 10 to 50	Inside
ITAGEN#2	Yes	Technical and transversal skills	1-20%	less than 10	Inside
ITAGEN#3	No	Technical skills	1-20%	from 10 to 50	Inside
ITAGEN#4	No	Technical and transversal skills	*	*	Inside and outside
ITAGEN#5	Yes	Technical and transversal skills	>75%	more than 50	Inside
ITAGEN#6	Yes	Technical and transversal skills	1-20%	from 10 to 50	Inside and outside
ITAGEN#7	Yes	Technical and transversal skills	>75%	from 10 to 50	Inside and outside
ITAGEN#8	Yes	Technical and transversal skills	>75%	*	Outside
ITAGEN#9	No	Technical and transversal skills	20-50%	from 10 to 50	Inside
ITAGEN#10	Yes	Technical and transversal skills	50-75%	from 10 to 50	Inside and outside
ITAGEN#11	Yes	Technical and transversal skills	50-75%	more than 50	Inside and outside
ITAGEN#12	Yes	Technical and transversal skills	50-75%	from 10 to 50	Inside
ITAGEN#13	No	Technical skills	0%	less than 10	Outside
ITAGEN#14	Yes	Technical and transversal skills	>75%	more than 50	Outside

*Information not available from the respondents.

Source: Primary data

4. QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

The findings collected across France, Italy, and the Netherlands show an impressive number of similarities, despite the three countries involved in our research present many differences with respect both to the entrepreneurship and business ecosystem, and to immigration flows and regulations. Drawing on the qualitative insights presented in the three national reports produced by ISG, University of Amsterdam, and the University of Bologna, we have identified some common themes that we discuss in the following sections.

4.1 Perceived differences between native and migrant entrepreneurs

By comparing our interview data, we could identify **three points** of view about whether migrant and native entrepreneurs were perceived as different in respect to their knowledge, skills, motivations and mindsets with respect to those of native entrepreneurs. The data revealed different points of view, that we discuss in the following as: (1) the “no difference” view; (2) the “exceptionalism” view; (3) the “gap” view. These views imply different approaches to the design of incubation services in terms of contents, activities, and methodologies.

Some incubation professionals declared that they see no difference between native and migrant entrepreneurs.

Some interviewees, working in generalist incubators, declared that “no difference” exists between native and migrant entrepreneurs. The image of migrant entrepreneur portrayed by these incubation professionals is that of someone having previous entrepreneurial experience, thus accustomed to the start-up environment – which in their opinion shares common characteristics, practices, and business/entrepreneurship language all around the world. As pointed out by a Dutch professional working in a generalist incubator: “some Dutch entrepreneurs also don’t know a lot about their targeted Dutch market, so we treat them all the same. We don’t treat them as different. The knowledge is the same for everyone. Maybe into coaching, we will elaborate a little bit more. But in the end, it’s the knowledge that every entrepreneur needs to have whether you’re an expert or a local”. This perspective suggests that some incubation professionals focus on entrepreneurial mindsets, knowledge and competences as the categorizing characteristics across their entrepreneurs, and therefore, if migrant entrepreneurs have the same perceived level of entrepreneurial exposure, they should not be treated differently from other local entrepreneurs. One excerpts from an interview with a generalist French incubator highlights well this point of view:

“If you really understand what the product is, why people are upset about a product or something; I guess in every country you find this. If you take the basic rules of entrepreneurship, it’s simple. You find a problem; you find a solution and you sell the solution to someone. And in every country, you can do the same, it’s not about culture or anything else. You just need to find a very big problem for a lot of people and solve it for them (FRAGEN#05).”

Another reason for viewing no difference between native and migrant entrepreneurs is linked to the idea that migrant entrepreneurs are able to quickly adapt and settle in the local environment due to their expertise as travellers and movers in different contexts, which endow them with international, cosmopolitan mindsets. Professionals maintaining

this opinion did not perceive cultural and language issues as a difference or a barrier. For them, communicating with migrant entrepreneurs, generally in English, does not represent a problem: indeed ITAGEN#12 confessed that communication in English was easier. Similarly, ITAGEN#6 said that English is often the *trait d'union* between the incubation professional and the entrepreneur, in that it is a neutral space between the respective cultures, and it represents the global standard for acceleration and incubation programs. This view was also shared by migrant-specific incubators. For instance, a professional in one of the French ones was at the beginning uncertain whether the incubator was fitting with our study because they work with innovation and high-profile immigrants:

We launched 10 years ago, but we are an incubator dealing with innovation. Our incubatees are people who have diplomas, high education. They mainly are French people or African people coming from Africa, but with already big backgrounds and maybe a start-up in Africa, and they want to develop things in Europe or France. So, it's not for people who are in difficulties (FRAMIG#01).

These accounts suggest that incubation professionals displaying a “no difference” view tend to refer to categories of migrants who can be defined as “elites” – in that they either display cosmopolitan, international mindsets; are able to fluently work in English; and/or display good understanding of entrepreneurial language and tools.

Some incubation professionals view migrant entrepreneurs through an “exceptionalism” lens.

A second view about migrant entrepreneurs portrayed by incubation professionals in our study, that we labelled as “exceptionalism view” emphasized some particularly positive differences between migrant and local entrepreneurs. For instance, in Italy some respondents in generalist incubators emphasized that migrant entrepreneurs have a natural force, a “hunger” to realise their business idea, a commitment to succeed that drives them and that enriched the staff of the incubator as well. In France, professionals either working for generalist and migrant-specific incubators underlined that the diverse background of migrant entrepreneurs endowed them with unique opportunities:

One of our beliefs too is that refugees and migrants actually have an advantage because they bring in a unique viewpoint and they bring a new viewpoint. And that's what makes them good entrepreneurs too. They have ideas and they innovate, they see opportunities that someone else may not see because they haven't seen anything else (FRAMIG#02).

From a personal and professional point of view, this is reflected in more satisfaction for incubation professionals than working with compatriots:

I found this more interesting because they are someone with a story, and for digital entrepreneurs, to make the world better, they don't need frontiers (FRAGEN#01).

These insights seem to suggest that incubation professionals hold a positive view about migrants' idiosyncratic opportunities and advantages also in light of the possible “reciprocity” in the relationships with entrepreneurs: diversity (imagined or objective) might be source of inspiration and reflection.

For several incubation professionals, there are several differences between migrant and native entrepreneurs.

Several incubation professionals displayed instead a “gap view”, which is rooted in several perceived differences between migrant and native entrepreneurs. First, there is a perceived gap in migrants' understanding of methods, regulatory framework, or approach to the business world by migrant entrepreneurs: “[migrant entrepreneurs] perform better but they need everything else, do not know the methods, the regulatory framework” (ITAGEN#3). Second, there is a more general cultural gap that is manifest in different worldviews, values, communication styles and expectations which are used by different entrepreneurs depending on the social context in which they were born and socialized.

This perceived gap is important because it easily generates cultural stereotyping, also from incubation professionals accustomed to work with migrant entrepreneurs. For instance:

“those coming from [African] English speaking countries are much more market oriented [...] those of [African] French-speaking origin, for example, are more fragile from this point of view. [...] African students have a slightly different conception of time and relationships. [...] Africans have to be a bit more stimulated [...] they collaborate, but they find it more difficult to adopt a leadership attitude” (ITAMIG#5).

A third gap is rooted in migrant entrepreneurs’ “outsiderness” with respect to the host country’s networks. This is particularly important for newcomers arriving from difficult situations, who have been thrown into a completely new country with little resources, information, and knowledge about the destination environment. Some of these entrepreneurs have faced trauma and thus might require some additional psychological support. One interviewee in France highlighted that the lack of network might be not only tied to their role of foreigners, but also their socio-economic status:

I don’t say that there was never a foreigner [among high-tech startups]. I don’t know their parents’ socio-professional category, but we feel that our audience is people who come from privileged social classes, who already have companies, because they have a network, they have businesses. So, in fact, this approach that we have is very solid, it has very good results. Our audience is not the audience you’re aiming for, it’s not that we don’t want it, but this is the social selection, I would say, the French economy does that (FRAGEN#10).

A similar view, which resemble a “classist” argument, is linked to the perceived lack of appropriate qualifications, which is maintained by some generalist incubators that do not work with migrants from non-European countries: *“You know, the level is a little bit different if you put them together with European guys. The start-up world is super high-level competitive. I don’t think they have the right skills. At least the ones I know” (FRAGEN#06).* Migrants, in line with their competences, should be limited to being entrepreneurs of “small shops”, or following her words, *“small like shoemakers or things that can be done with their hands. Because I see the start-up world so far from them” (FRAGEN#06).* However, this same manager discuss entrepreneurship as one solution to integration, driven by the importance of recognising immigrants’ competence and leading them to believe in it:

It is important to resolve and how to make these people integrate into society, feel useful, valuable and find their place. I think your work is super important and I’m grateful that people like you are doing it. And the question is, I, for example, where I live, we have a community in Morocco now, and they are very young, boys who came without a family. So, they, and we see them around town. And I’m always thinking about how to solve it, how to make them integrate. They need to feel that they are useful and that they can be doing something. Because they come from experiences in such bad circumstances that they just need someone to look at them and say, ‘Hey, you can do it. You have the skills (FRAGEN#06).

4.2 The role of incubators (“what” incubators do)

The interviews with both migrant-specific and generalist incubators allowed to identify the different roles that incubators can take with respect to either native or migrant entrepreneurs, which are then transformed into concrete services. Three roles emerged as key from our comparative analysis: entrepreneurial knowledge intermediation, network intermediation, and entrepreneurs’ development. Each of these roles have implications in terms of “how” the incubation professionals approach entrepreneurs, that will be discussed in the next section.

The research suggested three roles for incubators: entrepreneurial knowledge intermediaries, network intermediaries, and entrepreneurs' development supporters.

4.2.1 Incubators as entrepreneurial knowledge intermediaries

Incubators act as **entrepreneurial knowledge intermediaries** because they transfer to entrepreneurs ad-hoc knowledge in the entrepreneurship and business domain. Across the three countries, it is standard for generalist and migrant-specific incubators to either provide training, consulting, or mentoring on self-employment/entrepreneurship legal forms, project management, strategy, accountability, financial planning, market planning, marketing communication, negotiation, intellectual property rights, and human resources. However, not all these contents are offered to all the entrepreneurs across all incubators. There are several differences that emerged from our interviews. First, each incubator has its own content-specificity in terms of industry, technology, and digital tools.

Second, the type of contents is dependent on the specific needs of the entrepreneurs. As one French incubator specified, the structure of the program often does not change, but the content does, adapting it to the entrepreneurs' needs at that time. *"The format is not really changing, but the inside, yes, it's adapting"* (FRAGEN#04). A relevant driver of entrepreneurs' different needs in terms of incubation services is the life stage of the entrepreneurial idea – i.e., whether the (aspiring) entrepreneur looks for support before having a clear idea (pre-incubation), after having developed an early-stage idea (incubation), or after having designed a minimum viable product or a prototype (incubation-acceleration). The differences between incubators are very salient in this regard, determining clear-cut differentiations in the incubator's service offering and business model (and approach to entrepreneurs). As exemplified by this quote:

We don't offer workshops or classic classrooms because we don't trust that it's the current value that an accelerator needs to provide because you have a lot of content on YouTube or the Internet, or provided by schools. If you want, you can find all the information today on the Internet. And if you can't find it on the Internet, I think it's because the entrepreneur is stupid and not because, so information isn't there. So, we provide very specific one-to-one sessions with very specific topics every time. [...]

We are more a business accelerator than an incubator. We don't have entrepreneurs to understand what accounting is. It's not our job to do that. If you are an entrepreneur and don't know how an account works, basically it's your problem, because it's a basic step for an entrepreneur to manage the financial part (FRAGEN#05).

A third distinction in the role of the incubator emerged between those who target high-growth start-ups and those who have not such a focus, and thus also deal with low-growth/survival start-ups. The staff of incubators that want start-ups to scale-up (mostly generalist incubators) interpret the main role of the incubator as bringing the ideas to the market, therefore the incubation professionals are asked to support and assist start-ups when they are ready to enter the market and go through investment rounds. Assistance means listening to the needs of entrepreneurs, interpreting and understanding them, presenting an action plan, and providing tailor-made services. Start-ups should become market-ready by the end of the acceleration program: the staff advises on several issues, manages the relations with external consultants (i.e., for the legal aspects), and trains entrepreneurs to make them market ready. The staff has an external and analytical overview of the strategy and proposes technical solutions to integrate the idea of the start-up in the market (e.g., in the form of user experience, design thinking, business modelling). Also in high-growth start-ups, entrepreneurs lack managerial competences and financial knowledge: therefore, the incubation professionals support them in designing the management model of their start-up both through intermediating technical entrepreneurial knowledge, but – as discussed later – having a “developmental” role, to bring them up to the point when they are able to recognise their needs. Incubators that focus on low-growth/survival business ideas are instead less preoccupied with providing a boost to the market entry, but focus on ensuring robustness of the idea and sustainability in time. They often do not offer tailored one-to-one services on a choose-and-pick base, since they would be probably very expensive, but

either they provide training programs for cohorts of entrepreneurs, either put in place individual or group coaching and mentoring sessions. Professionals working for these incubators reported that they have a crucial role in co-designing development plans together with entrepreneurs, with the aim of favouring virtuous entrepreneurial processes. Their role is to accompany entrepreneurs throughout the entire path of business development, giving them the tools and mindsets to enable them growing autonomously after the end of the program. This can be better approached as a “development” role of the incubator, that we discuss below.

Lastly, the national origin of the entrepreneurs might have an impact on the knowledge intermediation role that the incubator is required to have. Our interviews revealed that there is a strong side of country-level entrepreneurship and business specific knowledge that should be made available to migrant entrepreneurs. As an instance, entrepreneurs have different ways of selling in different countries, for instance in terms of negotiations, supplier and customer relationships. Therefore, interviewees pointed out that there is some business-related knowledge that differentiate, for instance, Western countries with respect to other parts of the world, especially the global South. Other incubation professionals working with migrants expressed their difficulties in adequately “translating” their knowledge, for instance with respect to technical terms related to business development and bureaucracy. As well explained in this quote:

Intercultural mediation was important in the class because, in any case, there are some notions, there are some details, that even simply from the linguistic point of view can be accepted and perceived differently by the trainees. We realised that coming from many different countries, it was difficult to transmit the same notions with the same effectiveness; the difficulty that was reported to me by the teachers in transmitting notions because in fact the requirement of basic knowledge of the Italian language is difficult to self-certify. They were teaching complicated notions and notions that cannot be expressed with a basic language thus presupposing the possession of skills (ITAMIG#05).

In our sample, we found that migrant-specific incubators are much more focused on providing the basic knowledge in entrepreneurship with respect to generalist incubators. Their mission is often related to the development of entrepreneurial and business-related competences which can be useful throughout the entire lifespan of an individual, thus providing him/her with a mindset and related tools that can be applied in various contexts.

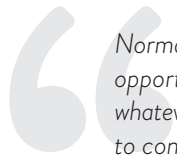
4.2.2 Incubators as network intermediaries

Funding is important, but what is also super important is to have the network. You are trying to fish in an ocean, so you must have someone to help you and to be your eyes and give you support (FRAGEN#10).

As exemplified by this sentence, our interviewees confirmed the key role of incubators as gatekeepers of local networks for all entrepreneurs, having the goal and the opportunities of intermediation the development of networks in several directions: upstream and downstream the value chain, investors and funders, and other relevant actors in the local or international business or wider socio-economic environment. In this sense, some professionals of incubation and acceleration programs describe themselves as “facilitators”: they aim to “make things a little bit leaner, a little bit easier for basically everyone” (ITAGEN#8).

Many professionals reported that one of the most important factors for entrepreneurial success is the connection with customers and the development of a commercial vision:

Incubators act as gatekeepers and facilitators of network for entrepreneurs: upstream and downstream the value chain, with investors, funders, and other stakeholders.



Normally the programmes by incubators and accelerators are not focused enough on business opportunities. They're much more focused on knowledge, training in academic skills, or whatever, but they don't help the entrepreneurs reach clients. My main concern, my main focus is to convince incubators and all our partners to develop how to find opportunities. If you want to help an entrepreneur, help him find a client. (FRAGEN#02)

The connection with customers is emphasised for entrepreneurs offering products or services as a business-to-business model: several incubators are now working as intermediaries and mediators between corporations and start-ups, emphasizing this as an activity of open innovation.

Incubators are also important intermediaries putting in touch entrepreneurs with investors and funders (e.g., banks, microfinance, or impact finance organization). Access to investment is key to allow entrepreneurs “breathing” to allow the start-up of their business or drive subsequent growth.

A wider network intermediation role has been described by professionals working in incubators aiming for a social impact and by migrant-specific incubators. According to our interviews, the reasons for entrepreneurial success are due to the fit of the business model with the environment: creating bonds and connections with the stakeholders ensures reaching socio-economic sustainability and social impact. Furthermore, as intermediaries with an institutional recognition, incubators have the possibility to influence the response of the actors of the ecosystem that could resist migrants’ inclusion. An interesting initiative in this regard has been described as the “network club” for migrant entrepreneurs carried out by FRAMIG#03. To meet the prerequisites of public policies (which only allows serving migrants who arrived in the last five years), this FRAMIG#03 seeks to mobilise funding that allows combining the integration of new migrants living in deprived neighbourhoods by stimulating encounters and activities with people who settled down in France for a longer time. This assists a rather large number of migrants and awakes their entrepreneurial spirit. They created clubs, that meet once a month, to discuss and develop entrepreneurial projects in areas of common interest (e.g., focused on African issues; women entrepreneurship; gastronomy; cosmetics). In addition, they are trying to develop the cooperation between individual entrepreneurs, to bring them partners, training, organisations, and financial organisations that deal with entrepreneurship, inviting them to join the club.

Lastly, incubators support the creation of networks not only strictly related to external stakeholders, but also with the group of people attending the program. This has been strongly emphasized by migrant-specific incubators. For instance, ITAMIG#3 reported that they leverage, when possible, the dynamics of the group to create a community and to foster the learning process.

Incubators are places where entrepreneurs are supported to “stand on their own feet and walk alone”.

4.2.3 Incubators as developers

Across all the sample, incubation professionals generally described themselves as pro-active and interactive people who engage in incubation and acceleration activities together with entrepreneurs. All incubators underlined that the staff, acting either as facilitator or enabler, does not substitute the aspiring entrepreneur but stands by his/her side.

In generalist incubators, the staff aims at providing notions and hints on competences to enable entrepreneurs to “stand on their own feet and walk alone”, as well as support and assistance to make start-ups market ready or financially-economically sustainable. Incubation professionals therefore balance the incubator’s role of technical entrepreneurial knowledge and a more developmental approach, acting “as a father who gives advice and guides but leaving entrepreneurs to express their potential. [...] having authority to guide them and put pressure to achieve results” (ITAGEN#6) or “as a mother who takes care” (ITAGEN#9). For some incubation professionals, especially those working with entrepreneurs having low-growth/survival business ideas, this approach translates into

accompanying entrepreneurs throughout the entire path of business development, providing them with tools and competences that will be necessary and useful during the entire business (and professional) life. This translates in a strong human-centred approach to the relationship with entrepreneurs, posing attention to the idiosyncratic needs and strengths of the individual.

According to our interviews, in migrant-specific incubators the development role of incubators acquires wider significance: “[the program] encourages the entrepreneur to ask himself/herself questions and gives methodology and instruments that could be helpful to increase the business awareness” (ITAMIG#1), implying also a “positive demotivational phase” to understand if entrepreneurship is what they want (ITAMIG#2).

These incubators, especially if targeted to newcomers who have faced involuntary migration patterns or trauma (e.g., refugees, asylum seekers), emphasize their role in providing psychological support and to empower entrepreneurs so as they can develop a “go-getter” mindset.

Newcomers participating in these programs “have been deeply unrooted, they start in a new country and are put [by the government] into a state of not doing anything and becoming very risk averse” (NLMIG#2). Thus, one of the primary objectives of migrant-specific incubators is “to give the people again their power and independence and just make them feel comfortable in their own skin” (NLMIG#2).

4.3 The approach of incubators (“how” incubators do what they do)

Our interviews were very insightful to identify different factors that characterize and differentiate the approach of incubators. The way they approach entrepreneurs is strongly related to their role and the activities/services that they implement. Three key elements that were identified from the analysis of qualitative materials across the three countries were competences of incubation professionals, the staffing of incubators, and the relationships with entrepreneurs.

4.3.1 Competences of incubation professionals

Both generalist and migrant-specific incubators build on a technical entrepreneurship- and business-related competences which are core to their work. Key “basic” knowledge displayed by the internal staff of incubators are related to project management, business modelling, market analysis and general marketing, basic product development, corporate organization, and basic financial strategy. Knowledge of methodologies such as business canvassing, lean start-up, scrum methodology are also assets which are core to the incubator’s staff, yet not diffused in each incubator. In addition, each member of the staff brings in his/her own vertical expertise. Staff however is not required to perfectly master specific technical topics, especially concerning technology; yet they should be informed on the latest developments to be in the position of advising start-ups regarding the economic and financial aspects of business development.

We have expertise in methodology for entrepreneurship. We have integrated our expertise in project management, for instance. It’s like when you go to the doctor in France, you have a generalist. You go because you have a problem. When the doctor can help you because he has some expertise, he can help you. And when he can’t, when it’s something really specific, he guides you to a specialist. So, it’s the same for us. We have a community of experts, about a hundred experts on very different topics. It can be lawyers, accountability, marketing, communication, that we can enter into contact (FRAMIG#04).

Some areas of expertise are indeed seen as having a status of “specialty”, such as the ones related to specific industry dynamics (unless the incubator has a vertical industry

Three elements characterize the approach of incubators: competences of staff, composition of staff, and relationships with entrepreneurs.

vocation), digitalization, engineering and technology, design thinking, innovation and intellectual property rights management, legal, ethics and impact (these last, however, are “core” to social entrepreneurship incubators). These “specialty” domains of knowledge and expertise are often sourced from external instructors, consultants, mentors, and experts – with ad-hoc requests for assistance depending on the entrepreneurs’ needs. The presence of internal specialized staff also depends on the size of the incubator.

Both professionals specifically targeting migrant entrepreneurs and those working in generalist incubators emphasized the importance to develop soft and interpersonal skills for successful service to entrepreneurs. Transversal skills are a prerequisite to work in incubation: *“If you don’t have soft skills you can’t work in this field”* (ITAGEN#5). The most cited transversal skills across the three countries were: empathy, emotional intelligence, proactiveness, sensitivity, flexibility, adaptability, active listening, creativity, innovation, teamwork, ability to manage people, communication, ability to deal with uncertainty and stress, and negotiation skills. The interviewees always emphasized the psychological and affective dimension of entertaining relationships with entrepreneurs. The ability to understand their needs, inclinations and potential, abilities and personality, also in relation with the team as a whole, emerged as the quintessential transversal competences to properly select entrepreneurs for incubation programs and to design adequate services. As reported by a professional:

Our job is a human one, it’s not a job for an analyst, it’s a job where you have to get people. It’s closer to HR than it looks like. You have to understand this person, for us it’s radical (ITAGEN#12).

For the interviewed professionals, working in migrant entrepreneurs additionally emphasize the need to develop these competences. When inquired about specific transversal competences to work with this group, the following were highlighted: capacity to build up a trustful relationship with the entrepreneur; cultural intelligence and intercultural skills; ability to encourage and ask triggering questions; open-mindedness; acceptance of diversity; psychological support. These competences become even more relevant when the target group involves fragile people, including newcomers who might have experienced traumatic conditions in the past.

Incubation professionals having experience with migrant entrepreneurs emphasized that cultural differences between the incubator’s staff and migrant entrepreneurs is a fact that cannot be neglected. The professionals working for these incubators therefore reported ways through which the perceived cultural distance can be overcome, by emphasizing two non-exclusive approaches.

First, cultural distance can be reduced through employing cultural mediators, who can help overcoming the cultural gap both in terms of language and cultural understanding and translation. Second, professionals can gain some knowledge about the socio-economic and cultural environment of migrants’ countries of origins, or about cultural traditions – to avoid incurring in the generation or replication of stereotypes that could hinder an effective support to entrepreneurship.

According to our interviews, the overall cultural differences cannot be entirely understood or addressed in the relationships with the incubator; nonetheless, the gap can be addressed with respect to business-related cultural understanding (e.g., explaining the way Dutch/French/Italian entrepreneurs approach business) – through communication, dialogue and understanding, which all belong to the soft skills that the ideal incubation professional should have. Experience is another asset mentioned to succeed in working with migrant entrepreneurs: as for local entrepreneurs, it helps in understanding the person in front of you and in tailoring the personal hard and soft skills accordingly:

Transversal competences are perceived as key to work with migrant entrepreneurs, especially with newcomers who might have experienced trauma in the past.

“ [Teachers/trainers] are not used to working with this target group and do not understand the specific needs. They are used to working with very standard methodologies and therefore they do not have those soft skills, that sensitivity to understand how they have to modify or adapt their professionalism to this target group. So it is a matter of adapting the terminology of the tools” (ITAMIG#02).

Therefore, what is important for the trainers is not only to have good entrepreneurial competences, but also being able to adapt to the different sets of people in the target group: “You have to level with your target group then you are a good trainer. If the distance is significant there is no transfer of skills,” explains one of the Dutch respondents (NLGEN#01).

The competences of incubation professionals working for migrant-specific initiatives are often differentiated on the basis of their function in the incubation program (i.e., trainers, mentors, tutors or program manager). Therefore, **trainers** master knowledge in topics such as business development and management, business financial sustainability, legal forms of business, access to credit and financial education, and marketing. Often, the training modules are tailored on participants’ needs, and the trainers are supported by cultural mediators who translate the concepts in a comprehensive way and smooth the possible cultural misunderstandings.

Mentors, on the other side, are required to be familiar with the entrepreneurial world and to be figures apt to encourage the entrepreneur in pursuing his/her business idea: they “are the drive belt between Italian and foreign entrepreneurship, meaning people who experienced similar difficulties in adapting to the Italian context and that can prevent new entrepreneurs to make the mistakes they made” (ITAMIG#06). As one incubation professional said, “we looked for mentors with strong interpersonal skills, listening skills; and they are people who had an inclination to certain attitudes so that they could transmit their skills more effectively” (ITAMIG#6). This points out to the need for transversal or soft skills besides technical ones, which is a theme that we will explore in the next paragraphs.

Lastly, **tutors and project managers** are required to be familiar with the entrepreneurial world and dynamics as well, yet they should facilitate the connection between entrepreneurs, the financial and credit ecosystem, and all the other relevant actors.

Tutors and project managers actively interact with entrepreneurs and have the power to advise them on the competences and skills to acquire, according to the needs and ideas of the migrant. Therefore, they have a broad vision on people’s needs and competences, and also on the other figures that could guide him/her in his/her entrepreneurial path, displaying connection and coordination expertise.

In doing so, tutors and project managers pay attention to the external context in order to facilitate the interaction between external context/new tools and the target, and apply lateral thinking, personal empathy and listening skills.

4.3.2 Building relationships

The interviews revealed different approaches in the ways relationships are established between incubation professionals and entrepreneurs, which are strongly intertwined with the role covered by the incubator. Some professionals in generalist incubators emphasized that they focus more on technical contents in establishing their relationship with entrepreneurs. It follows that communication between them is more straightforward and centred around topics linked to the business growth. Incubation professionals should be able to tell entrepreneurs what they have to change to pursue their business goals, because “startupper, entrepreneurs are people with a strong ego, otherwise one doesn’t become an entrepreneur if he/she doesn’t have a hunger, resourcefulness, sometimes arrogance” (ITAGEN#8). In line with the competences described before, the staff should be able to build a relationship that can balance guidance towards the best path for business development and entrepreneurs’ autonomy:

We work with people, and we should be well trained and ready to take their skills and abilities on board. [...] We must have a motivating yet respectful and understanding approach (ITAGEN #13).

According to this view, incubator staff is like a specialized coach that gives advice and pushes entrepreneurs to the boundaries to make them achieve their goals. The attention is on the business and on the entrepreneurial team, having clear in mind that the final aim is bringing the start-up to the market.

In generalist incubators, incubation professionals highlighted the role of previous working experience in the start-up environment to establish a more close and supportive relationship with entrepreneurs. The sentence “*the difference is made by people that previously had a start-up and who experienced failure, [because] it enhanced empathy between the start-upper and the incubation staff*” (ITAGEN#12) encompasses this concept. Several professionals in generalist incubators mentioned that the motivation of incubation professionals is very important. They must be committed to the cause and should “love” the world of start-ups, because, in such fast-changing and very demanding environment, if the motivation and commitment are not high, it is hard to stay for a long time. Therefore, personal experience, personal commitment, and personal interest in the start-up world are seen among the most important factors for becoming a good incubation professional in these incubators.

On the other side, some professionals across generalist and migrant-specific incubators reported that the personal relationship with aspiring or current entrepreneurs gains importance over the achievement of the business objective. Such more personal approach is still centred around communication, dialogue, and listening skills but the relationship between incubation professionals and entrepreneurs tends to be educational. Incubation professionals establish a more personal relationship with entrepreneurs, acting as leaders and caretakers who are credible because they are familiar with the start-up world. Sensitivity, open-mindedness, empathy, and understanding were recurrent words during the interviews, thus underlying an emotional relationship that goes in parallel with an incubation-driven one.

The different approaches could be influenced by the type of program, the mission of the incubator, and/or the individual sensibility. We think that what described in the previous lines cannot therefore be easily generalised. However, the relationship with migrant entrepreneurs seems to be more difficult than the relationship with locals because of the cultural and linguistic barriers that may exist and that could represent a source of misunderstanding. As discussed above, incubation professionals working with migrants try to establish relationships based on active and empathic listening towards the migrants’ stories, being attentive to certain dynamics related to the cultural and personal background; and collaborating with cultural mediators to overcome potential difficulties.

Migrant-specific incubators across the three countries have stressed the importance of being flexible during the program (e.g., during the training sessions), as well as of being careful in establishing trusted relationships with participants, being open to listen and encourage the exchange of ideas.

In migrant-specific incubators, the interaction among trainers, tutors, mentors, and cultural mediators should be really well coordinated in order to be functional and effective. Indeed:

During the program we saw an intercultural adaptation between migrants and tutors, including trainers, mentors and cultural mediators, and migrants’ good understanding about the management of the enterprise in the territory. The program was carried out perhaps in a more functional and effective way with the interaction of the various components of the activity. It is a project that in my opinion was born from the migrant’s point of view, that is, activities that I would expect to find if I were the migrant myself, that is, to be welcomed and taken along a path that as one of the last steps to interface with someone who has experienced difficulties that I probably would have had to face (ITAMIG#06).

The sources of knowledge for incubators are found in staffing and training, learning-by-doing, and external experts.

4.4 The sources of knowledge for incubation professionals

We have shown what incubators do – fulfilling three roles of entrepreneurial knowledge intermediaries, network intermediaries, and developer. However, where and how do incubators access the knowledge and competences that they then transmit to entrepreneurs? Our interviews suggested four patterns through which this happens: (1) internal staffing and training; (2) learning-by-doing; and (3) external sourcing.

4.4.1 Internal staffing and training

The primary source of available knowledge and competences at each incubator is its own internal staff. During our interviews, the theme of **diversity** in incubators' staff composition emerged several times. Unless the incubator has a vertical specialisation, the interviewed incubation professionals reported that the heterogeneous composition of the team in terms of technical competences is an added value.

The team is your asset [...] overall a team should be diverse. Diverse doesn't mean gender diversity – that is important anyway but a bit trivial – it should be diverse in terms of people. Diversity is not only a gender issue, it's a mindset issue" (ITAGEN#12).

According to this perspective, diversity is mirrored in the variety of hard and soft skills each staff member has, that altogether is able to propose an all-round strategy to the entrepreneurial development. However, none of the interviewed incubators reported to have implemented a policy for diversity and inclusion (D&I). In terms of cultural and ethnic/racial diversity, none of the interviewed Italian incubators employed non-native Italians among their staff – besides intercultural mediators who however have a “consulting” ad-hoc role in incubation programs. Few of the generalist incubators in The Netherlands instead had foreign-born managers or employees. In France, a couple of migrant-specific incubators were founded and managed by migrants.

According to one interviewee, ethnic and cultural diversity within the team ensures intercultural skills which are key to understand and serve migrant entrepreneurs:

For our staff we are more recruiting people with skills and the academic basis on the issue of integration and that's a real intercultural team. We have two Senegalese, one girl from South Africa, one Italian, one Greek, one Mauritanian. So, there are not many French in the team (FRAMIG#03).

However, it is not clear from our data whether incubators which are more concerned or aware about D&I are those managed by migrants. For instance, one manager in a generalist incubator just reports about the diversity in terms of age, gender, background, and nationalities within the incubator and declares: “I don't know if it's done on purpose, but it's just natural” (FRAMIG#08).

As shown in the descriptive statistics of this report, not all the incubators' staff carries out training, nor they have formalized organizational policies for training and professional development. For some interviewees, this is explained by the fact that the knowledge and competence required for this job can be acquired through peer or experiential learning (as discussed later), but also because of time or budget constraints (even if one interviewee reported that, thanks to their institutional connections, they could attend some courses for free). Nonetheless, the professionals that we interviewed understand the importance of educating themselves. Most often, they do so by discussing relevant topics among colleagues, by reading a lot, by being self-critical, and by creating an internal feedback system. Across the three countries, incubation professionals attend formal training, provided by external organizations (e.g., universities, corporates, freelancer trainers/educators), on specific topics which are relevant for their job, focusing on either “the brain, the heart, the skills” (NLMIG#02). Among the training on technical knowledge,

Not all the incubators' staff carries out training, even if there is widespread understanding of the relevance of training and education.

professional mentioned topics such as: commercial prospecting, digital marketing, how to create a budget, strategic finance, PowerPoint, social entrepreneurship, financial instruments, venture capital, impact finance, and open innovation. Among the transversal competences, they mentioned negotiation, leadership, cultural awareness, cross-cultural communication, and mentoring. It is important to underline that professionals in generalist incubators were more likely to report attending technical courses; whereas professionals in migrant-specific incubators reported more often training on transversal skills, especially linked to intercultural competences.

4.4.2 Learning-by-doing

There's no real training for our job. The training is when you enter, it's just working with the other, learning from another one that's been here, and seeing and participating in the meetings with them. That's the way we learn. It's learning by doing, basically (FRAGEN#09).

As exemplified by this excerpt, across the three countries and types of incubators, incubator professionals – especially those working for generalist incubators – emphasised the importance of hands-on, practical experience and knowledge of the start-up world to be effective in working with entrepreneurs. In several instances, in Italy the staff of generalist incubators were chosen among either previous start-uppers, or people being professionally raised and socialized in the start-up sector. In both cases, incubation professionals demonstrated to have broad knowledge of the interaction models, processes, methodologies, rules, schemes, and dynamics of start-up world acquired through practical experience, and with exposure to multiple “case studies”: entrepreneurs and their businesses become a potential source of knowledge. Such kind of knowledge cannot be learned in a formal way: articles and books can be read, or videos can be seen; yet only direct, hands-on experience really increases the expertise in this field. In the words of a professional, “the didactical part is important but if it is not applied multiple times it cannot catch those nuances that can improve your job” (ITAGEN#06). Considering that generalist incubators have also emphasized personal motivation and passion to work in the start-up world as an important characteristic of incubation professionals, together with the elements above, the reasons why almost all incubators report to have informal training activities become clearer. Incubators tend to train new staff through traineeships and tutoring activities because people with the specific required background are hard to find. Besides, they are constantly learning from start-ups, from each other, and from the ecosystem.

Interviewees working for migrant-specific incubators did not underline the role of prior practical experience as mainstream incubators did. Across the three countries, our data seem to suggest that, while technical and business subjects are certainly an important asset in professionals' background, they should be complemented by other types of experiences and knowledge related to wider domains of knowledge (e.g., culture, psychology, welfare). For trainers, who have expertise in a certain topic, learning-by-doing is ensured by continuous exposure to relationships entertained in their field of expertise (e.g., African markets). Tutors might have an inclination to business and start-up incubation also thanks to previous experience. However,

The ability to enhance the value of people within a team, the ability to create the glue between teams, the ability to teach how to reflect on what worked and what didn't, certain methodologies, a monitoring of all these things here is learned by studying, experience alone is not enough (ITAMIG#05).

This sentence illuminates that knowledge about methodologies is required by incubation professionals to be able to establish a trusted and supportive relationship with entrepreneurs: learning-by-doing is not enough, training should be undertaken – in domains

Hands-on experience is a source of knowledge for incubation professionals, but this entails gaining exposure to meaningful business and non-business contexts and reflection.

External consultants, trainers, and mentors should be aligned with incubators' goals and methodologies and trained to ensure transversal competences such as communication competences and active listening.

such as psychology, culture, and education. Moreover, according to several interviews with social or migrant-specific incubators, the experience required to effectively incubate migrant entrepreneurs is also related to connecting with the other parts of the local ecosystem, not only regarding entrepreneurship, but also employment and welfare institutions.

4.4.3 External sourcing

Generalist and migrant-specific incubators rely on the knowledge and competences provided by external consultants, trainers, and mentors to carry out their activities. These figures tend to be people within the incubator's network, so they are linked with the incubator by recurrent collaborations or shared interests. This has been underlined by the interviewees as very important to maintain the alignment in terms of goals, teaching practices and styles, so to make sure that the program's participants do not experience a difference in the quality or training standards throughout the program. While this practice has clear advantages, since it allows relying on a wider and more specialized set of competences, it should be noted that this generates costs in terms of selection of appropriate experts, and coordination with the incubator's values and practices. External trainers should be selected not only by looking at the technical/business competences, but also by assessing the fit with the incubator's style and the ability to working with its audiences.

The risk of misalignments is higher when the targeted entrepreneurs are migrants. In fact, the interviewed professionals emphasized that external experts might not have the needed approach and transversal skills required to deal with the target group – which, as discussed earlier – go beyond the technical/business expertise. In this regard, the selection of appropriate mentors to provide incubation support was one of the most widely discussed themes in our interviews with migrant-specific incubators. Several of them described the process that they apply to select and train them. For instance, ITAMIG#06 reported that they had five mentors for 20 migrants, each of them with different business specialisations, who were trained on topics such as intercultural dimension, negotiation skills, and conflict resolution. In parallel they had to follow an on-line course equipping them with interpersonal skills, an open and welcoming mindset, and active listening skills. Another interesting quote reported that:

Mentors need to have proven experience in the field that interests us most, that is, the start-up and development of enterprises. After that, they must submit a questionnaire of 117 very technical questions and at that point, after having passed that questionnaire, they are invited to follow a training course. It used to be in person selection process, lasting a whole day in which we [tutors and project managers] got to know the mentor, obviously, in those six or seven hours of training and we gave a series of contents. But we can say that one of the main objectives was to get to know the mentor personally and understand if he or she had those competences, those soft skills that we need, so when we could do the training in person, we also analysed the way they ate, if we gave them a lunch break, we ate together and that was one of the moments we analysed. [...] Not everyone can become a mentor: who has the technical skills can become one but always accompanied by empathic listening, which for me is fundamental: if you don't have these two things, it's better to avoid becoming a mentor. And on the other hand, in addition to having a strict selection process with respect to the skills of the mentors, we try to constantly give them training to work on these aspects, on these transversal skills, so that they have the new tools (ITAMIG#01).

Lastly, another source of knowledge and competences for incubators is embodied by cultural mediators. As explained by one informant, “there are cultural aspects that can be missed out by incubation professionals working on the technical aspects of a training program. [...] He [the cultural mediator] helped us to understand and to contextualize and make more specific the objective for some participants involved in the training program, only by pointing out some cultural aspects” (ITAMIG#3).

5. QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

The respondents to the survey were asked to identify one's own job role to streamline the questions on the competences and needs. In our sample, around 73% of respondents can be defined as incubators' managers (i.e., 13% general directors, 8% assistants to the direction, 52% program managers). The remaining 27% of respondents were trainers (13%) or external mentors and consultants (14%).

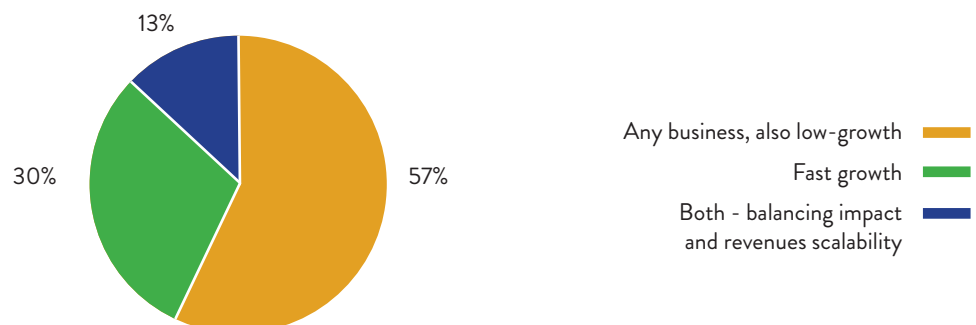
5.1 Structure, programs and activities of surveyed incubators

The sampled incubators were on average established in 2014. The majority of them (66%) are not-for-profit. 43% of the incubators are private, 29% are public and 28% have a mixed public-private legal status. On average, sampled incubators have 5 full-time employees. On average, three are females and about 1.3 are foreigners.

The majority of sampled incubators have no "vertical" industry specialization (59%). There are no statistically significant industry differences between migrant-specific and mainstream incubators. Around 29% of the sampled incubators have a "social" or "impact" scope of action. Of the surveyed incubators, 32% propose just one program per year; 39% propose different programs every year, depending on the sponsor; 20% propose either more programs per year or customized programs; and 9% offer a mix of the three above.

The majority of incubation programs are focused on supporting any kind of business, also low-growth or lifestyle businesses (56%). Around 30% only support companies aiming to grow in time and fast. The rest (13%) focuses on both, also depending on the program, trying to balance impact and revenues scalability (Figure 2).

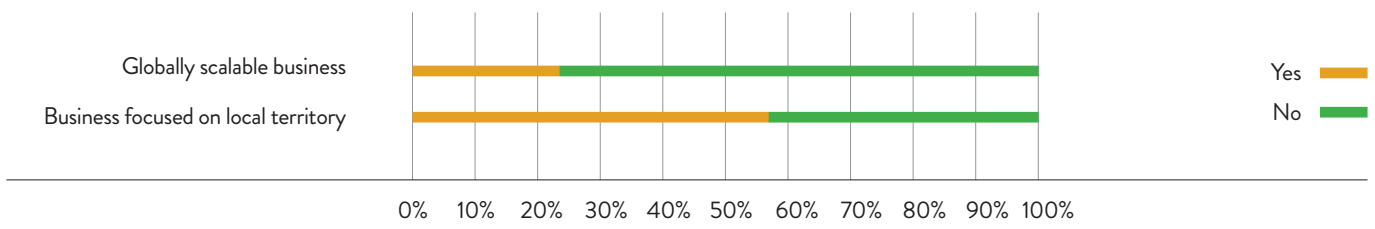
FIGURE 2. TYPE OF BUSINESSES ACCEPTED IN SAMPLED INCUBATORS



Source: Primary data

As shown in Figure 3, 55% of incubation programs look for companies that stay in the local territory (e.g., they have to open an office locally). There are no statistical differences in this regard between migrant-specific and mainstream incubators. Instead, non-profit incubators are statistically more interested in local companies (63% vs. 40%). Only 22% of incubation programs explicitly focus on developing globally scalable businesses (e.g., through supporting export management or foreign investments). For-profit incubators are statistically more inclined towards supporting international companies than non-for-profit ones (40% vs. 13%). No statistical differences are found between migrant-specific and mainstream incubators.

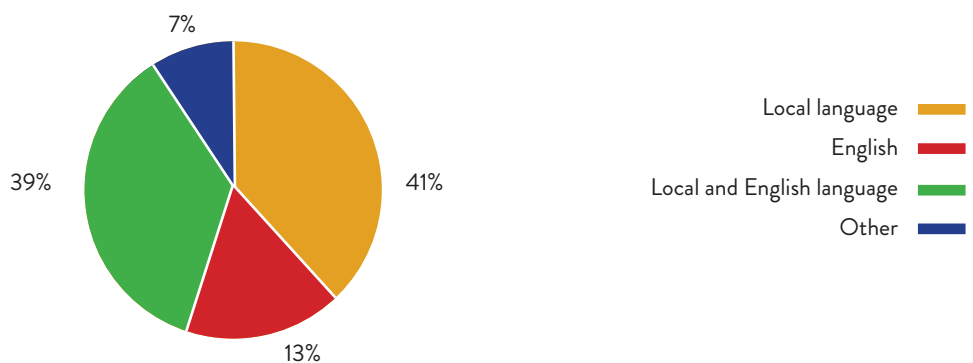
FIGURE 3. GLOBAL VS. LOCAL ORIENTATION OF INCUBATED BUSINESSES IN SAMPLED INCUBATORS



Source: Primary data

41% of the surveyed incubation programs are offered in the national local language, 13% only in English, while 39% programs are both in English and in the national local language (Figure 4). The remaining 7% of incubators report that the programs might be designed in different languages, or that they are available to repeat the contents in English if needed by participants, or are open to allow translation services organized by participants. No statistical differences emerged across incubators with respect to the use of language in the programs.

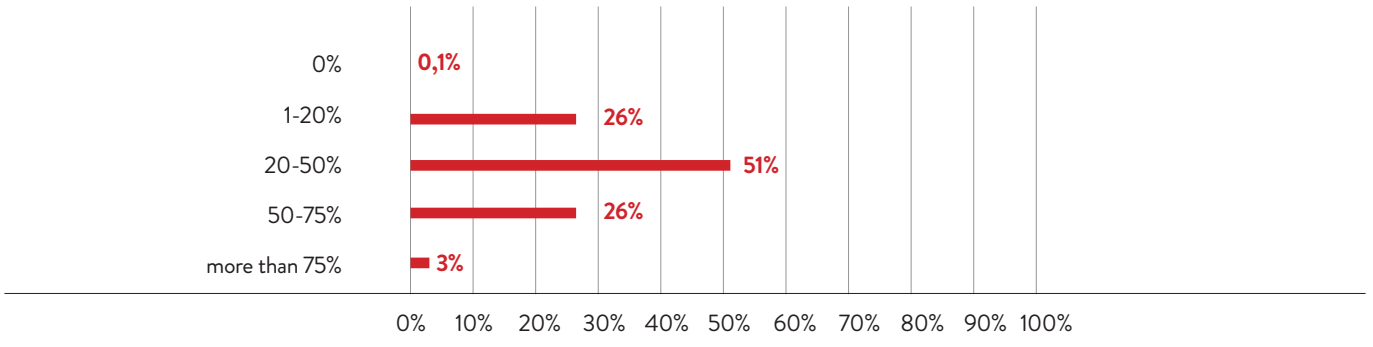
FIGURE 4. LANGUAGE OF THE PROGRAMS IN SAMPLED INCUBATORS



Source: Primary data

On average, incubators accept 28 participants per program. Women are overall a minority in the participating entrepreneurs across all the types of incubators (Figure 5). However, women are over-represented as participants to social incubators' programs. No differences are found for migrant-specific and generalist incubators.

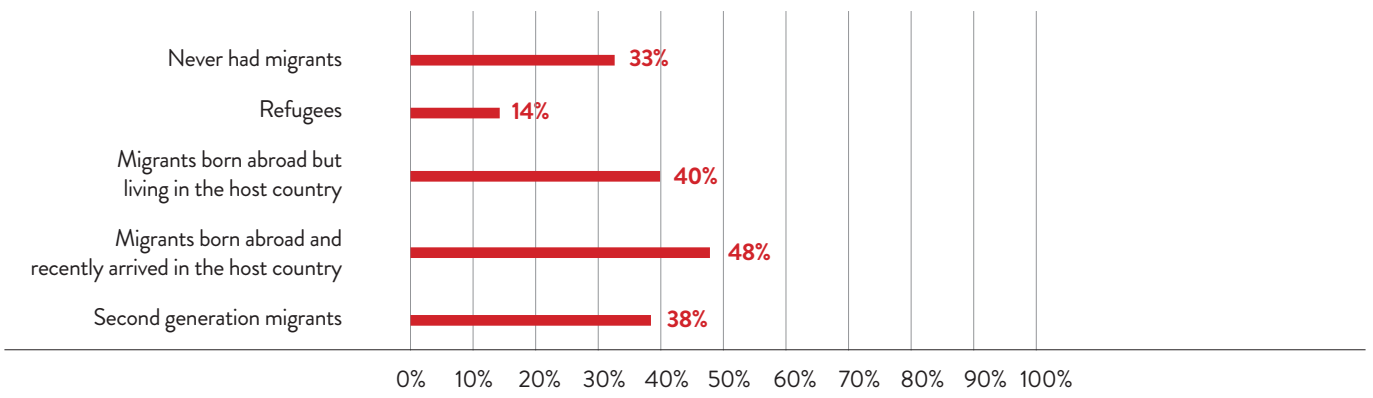
FIGURE 5. SHARE OF FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS IN SAMPLED INCUBATION PROGRAMS



Source: Primary data

Among the sampled incubators, 33% declared that they never had migrants among the participants to the incubation program (Figure 6). Around 14% answered that they served refugees; 40% served migrants born abroad but already settled in the host country; 48% served migrants born abroad and recently or in-purpose arrived in the host country; and 38% served second generation migrants (e.g., children of immigrants having resided in the host country for a long time). There were no statistically significant differences between for-profit and not-for-profit incubation programs in catering migrant entrepreneurs. Instead, social incubators displayed a higher propensity to have served first-generation migrant entrepreneurs than non-social ones (61% vs. 31% respectively).

FIGURE 6. PRESENCE OF MIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS IN SAMPLED INCUBATION PROGRAMS

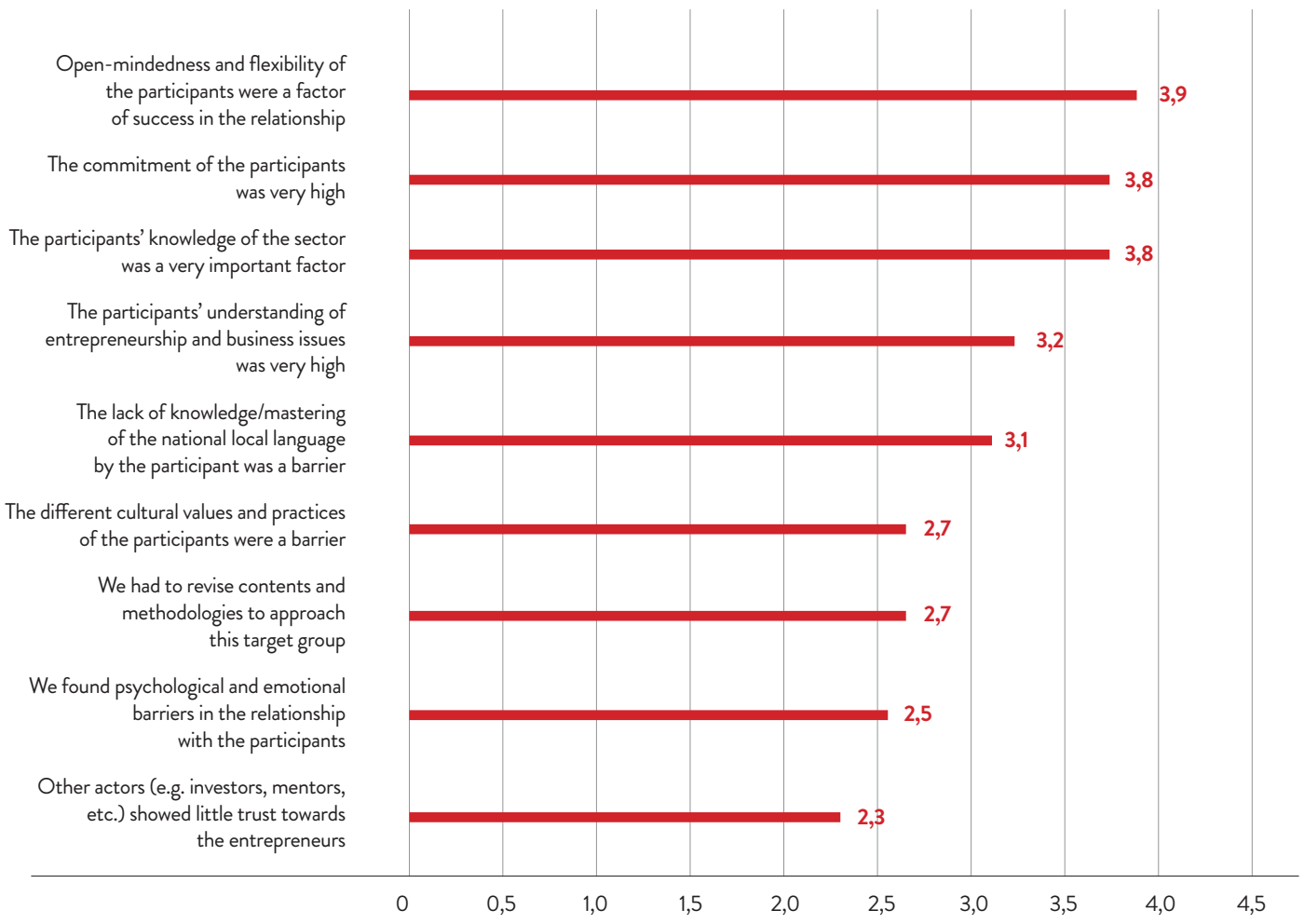


Source: Primary data

In the majority of cases, migrants are encountered as solo entrepreneurs (67%). Teams composed with other migrants (33%) and with local entrepreneurs (35%) are fewer occurring situations. It is interesting to note that solo entrepreneurs are significantly more served by not-for-profit incubators than for-profit ones (76% vs. 50% respectively) – whereas teams composed by migrants (with other migrants) are more likely to be found in for-profit incubators (55% vs. 21% of non-for-profit ones). No difference is found with respect to teams with migrant and local entrepreneurs, or with respect to social incubators.

Incubators’ professionals were asked to evaluate the perceived success factors and barriers to deal with migrant entrepreneurs, using a scale from 1 (not at all agree) to 5 (very strongly agree). Figure 7 displays the results: the most relevant success factor lies in migrants’ (perceived) open-mindedness and flexibility; the strongest barrier was the lack of knowledge and mastery of the language in the host country.

FIGURE 7. OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS IN SERVING MIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS



Source: Primary data

However, there are some statistically significant differences to be noted among incubators:

- Open-mindedness as success factor was noted more in generalist than migrant-specific incubators (4.3 vs. 3.8)
- Barriers linked to a lack of trust by other actors was higher in generalist than migrant-specific incubators (2.9 vs. 2.2)
- Language as a barrier was noted as most relevant by not-for-profit incubation managers (3.6 vs. 2.3 in for-profit incubators)
- Psychological barriers were noted as most relevant in not-for-profit than for-profit incubators (2.8 vs. 2.1)

Incubation managers were asked to evaluate (on a scale ranging from 1 = not at all; to 5 = very much) the extent to which a list of activities were “core” and strategically important for their organizations. As shown in Figure 8, managers emphasized the importance of networking, mentoring, and training on business-related contents. Conversely, the least relevant activities are the support in finding personnel, investing in incubated firms, and support in finding entrepreneurial team members. To be noted is also the low value attributed to psychological-emotional assistance. According to the qualitative findings, this service should have a role to play to improve diversity and inclusion of migrant entrepreneurs.

FIGURE 8. MANAGERS’ EVALUATION OF KEY ACTIVITIES FOR SAMPLED INCUBATORS



Source: Primary data

A closer examination of the data reveals the following statistically significant differences among types of incubators in the perceived relevance of these activities:

- Migrant-specific incubators value as more important the provision of psychological-emotional assistance than generalist incubators. Conversely, they attribute less importance to the provision of incubation infrastructures and spaces; and to supporting the connection to other potential entrepreneurial team's members and potential personnel.
- Social incubators attribute more strategic importance to mentoring activities and to the establishment of local networks than non-social incubators.
- Not-for-profit incubators attribute more strategic importance to providing training on soft skills, psychological-emotional assistance, and to supporting in finding entrepreneurial team members. Conversely, not-for-profit incubators attribute less importance to providing networking activities with the international ecosystem.

With respect to training activities focused on enterprise/business contents, the privileged topics regard economic and financial planning (53%) and pitching (52%), followed by marketing (47%), basics of entrepreneurship (48%), communication (44%), and lastly by legal and bureaucratic information on business creation and management (39%). Further analyses show that training about the basics of entrepreneurship and about marketing are more likely to be provided by not-for-profit incubators than by profit incubators. There are no statistical differences, instead, between migrant-specific and generalist incubators.

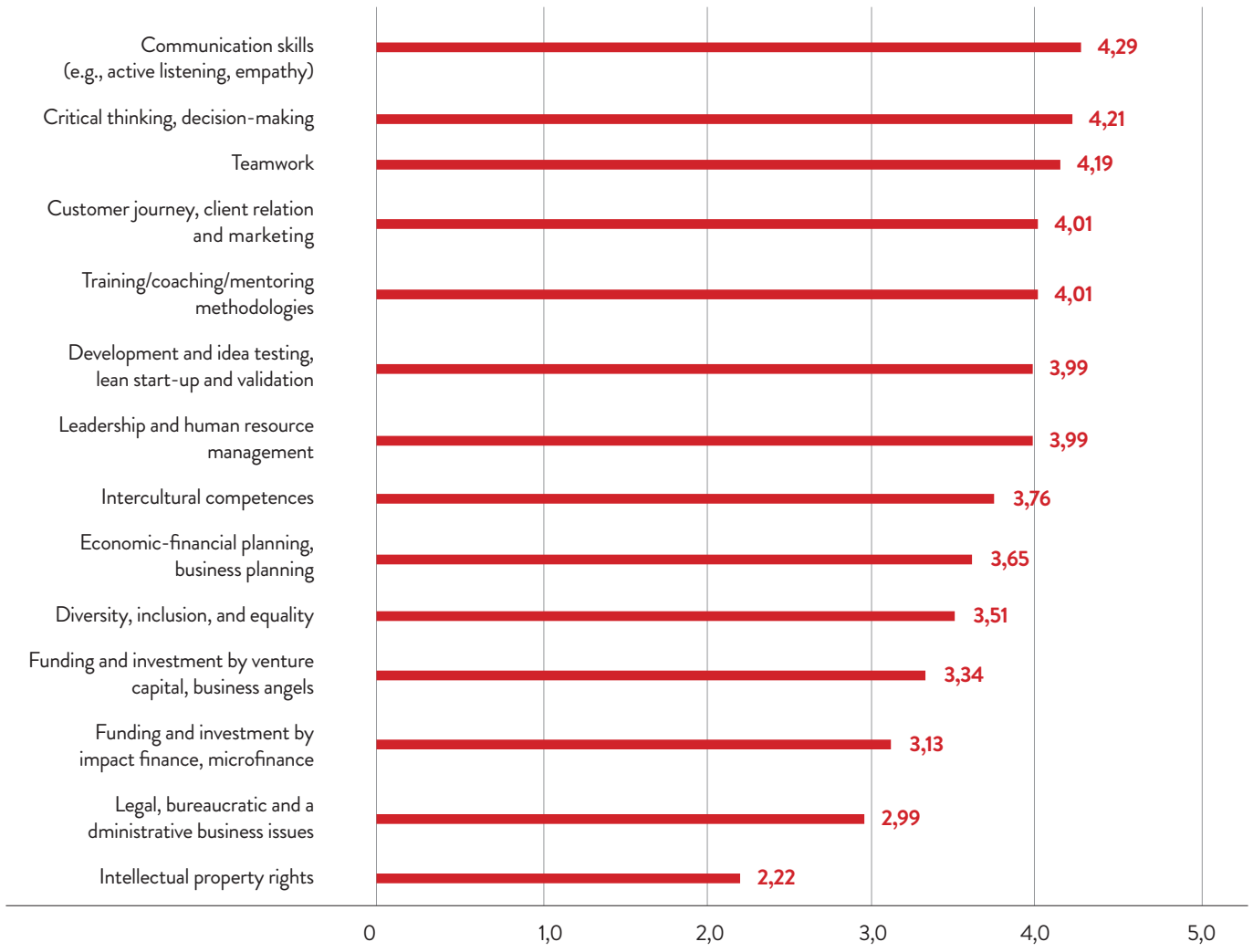
Incubators that carry out training on soft skills is mainly provided by internal staff (65%), but incubators also use external trainers (39%) or alumni of the incubator (28%).

5.2 Competences and training needs at surveyed incubators

Surveyed incubation professionals were asked to evaluate their competences across a set of contents and domains which emerged as relevant for working in incubators in the qualitative part of the research. Results are shown in Figure 9 according to a scale ranging from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high). Respondents evaluate their soft skills as particularly advanced – such as communication skills (emphatic and active listening), critical thinking and decision-making, teamwork, etc.. Respondents also evaluated as rather high their methodological competences in training/coaching/mentoring (mean = 4.01). Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) and intercultural skills, while not at the top of available competences, are positioned anyway after the scale mid-point, thus signaling a belief of sufficient expertise in these areas. Incubation professionals feel instead less competent in intellectual property rights; and legal, administrative and bureaucratic contents – which in fact the qualitative part of the work indicated as possessed by external specialists.

It is interesting to note that no difference in these competences were found among migrant-specific and generalist incubators. Instead, professionals in for-profit incubators report higher competences in funding/investing by venture capitalists and coaching/mentoring/training methodologies with respect to not-for-profit incubators. Social incubators instead display less competences in intellectual property rights than non-social incubators, but report higher communication skills.

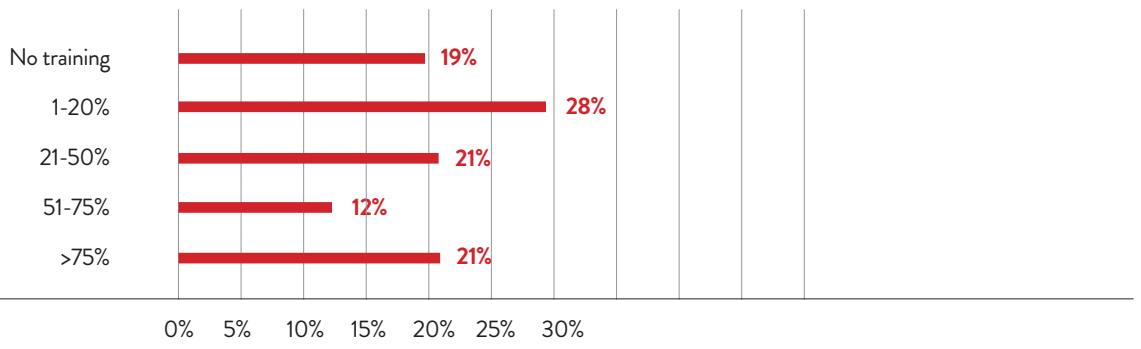
FIGURE 9. SURVEYED INCUBATION PROFESSIONALS' EVALUATION OF THEIR COMPETENCES



Source: Primary data

Incubators' managers were asked to report which is the percentage of the staff of the incubation program that attend formal training courses and professional development activities each year. As shown in Figure 9, around 47% of respondent incubators can be considered "low formal training" environments for their staff (0-20% of staff trained/year), 21% "medium formal training" (21-50% of staff trained/year) and 33% "high formal training" (>51% of staff trained/year) environments. There are no relevant differences between migrant and generalist incubators.

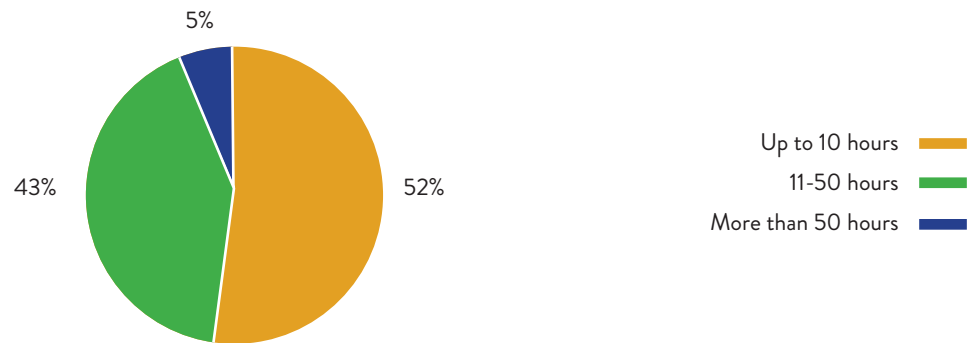
FIGURE 10. SHARE OF INCUBATOR'S STAFF WHO ATTEND FORMAL TRAINING ACTIVITIES PER YEAR



Source: Primary data

In case the incubators' staff participate to any formal training, the majority of them carries out up to 10 hours of training per year (52%) (Figure 10). Incubators that are “low formal training” are also slightly less engaged in longer training periods (47% carrying out up to 10 hours of training vs. 45% of “high formal training” incubators). Among the different types of incubators, migrant-specific incubators carry out a lower number of formal training hours with respect to generalist incubators.

FIGURE 11. AMOUNT OF FORMAL TRAINING ACTIVITIES PER YEAR IN SURVEYED INCUBATORS

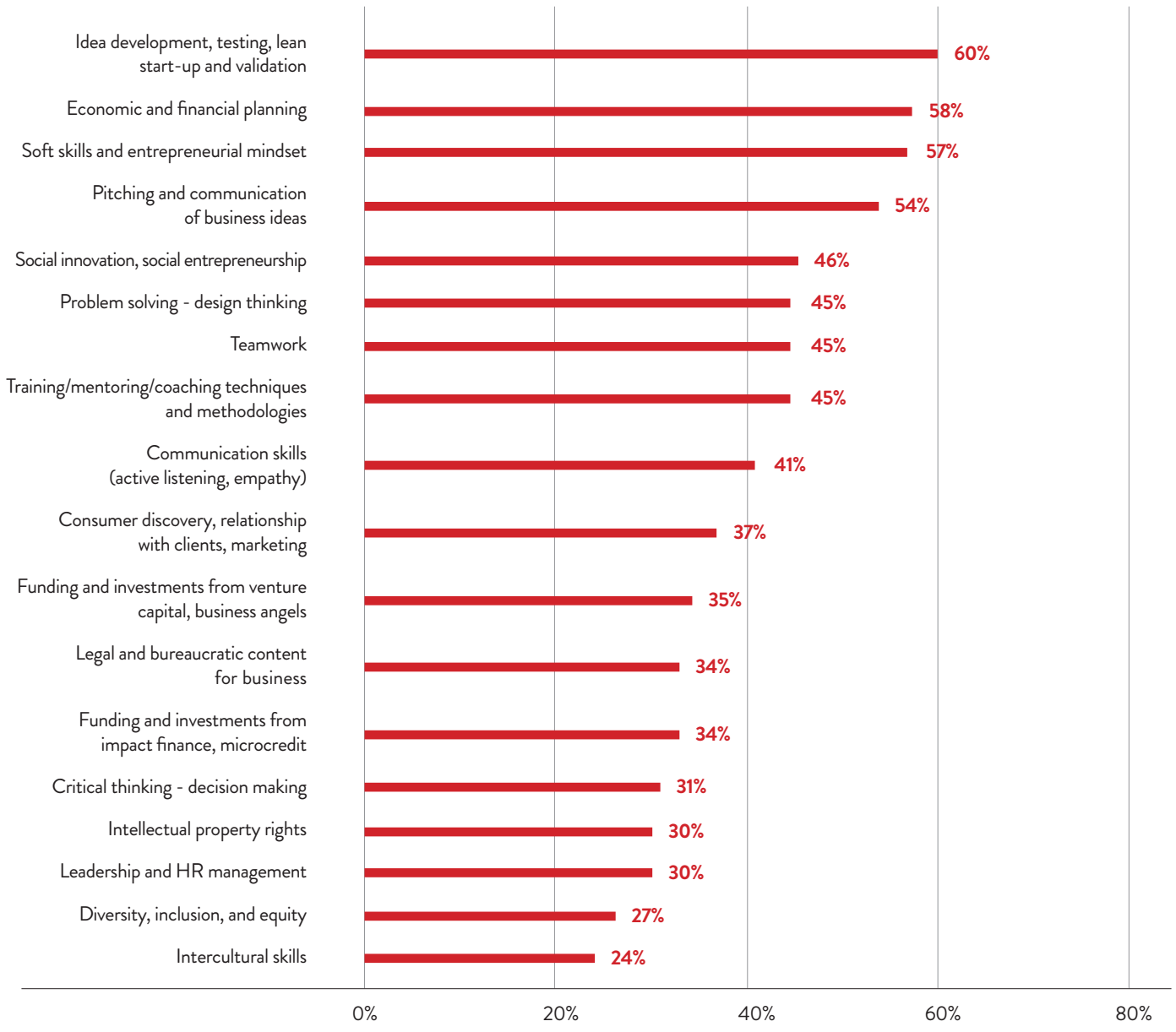


Source: Primary data

Formal training activities are carried out mainly outside the incubator (e.g., training centers, other partners: 52%). 25% of incubators opt to organize training internally, or in both locations (23%).

With respect to the contents of training, all surveyed incubation professionals provided an overview about the contents that are covered in these formal training activities. As shown in Figure 11, incubation professionals mostly attend training on “business-related” topics, such as idea development, testing, lean startup and validation (60%); economic and financial planning (58%); and pitching and communicating business ideas (54%); but also on soft skills and entrepreneurial mindset (57%). Training in topics such as diversity, inclusion, and equity (28%) and intercultural skills (24%) are the least attended training contents.

FIGURE 12. CONTENTS OF FORMAL TRAINING ACTIVITIES PER YEAR IN SURVEYED INCUBATORS



Source: Primary data

Some additional analyses reveal distinct patterns among different types of incubators:

- Migrant-specific incubators are significantly less attracted by specific business training in the area of intellectual property rights (17% vs. 43% in generalist incubators), business planning (44% vs. 71%), lean startup and idea validation (41% vs. 79%), pitching (39% vs. 69%) and impact investing/finance (21% vs. 45%);
- Social incubators are significantly less attending training in the area of intellectual property rights (3% vs. 42% in non-social incubators), legal and bureaucratic contents (19% vs. 41%), lean startup and idea validation (44% vs. 67%) and customer discovery, relationships with clients and marketing (22% vs. 45%);
- Not-for-profit incubators are significantly less focused on training on funding and investment from impact finance (25% vs. 51% of for-profit incubators).

6. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary of findings

Interviews with generalist and migrant-specific incubators revealed several insights into the training needs of incubation professionals, which MIG.EN.CUBE, together with other projects and policy measures, should acknowledge as relevant for designing appropriate training materials targeting incubation professionals. In the following, we highlight some final considerations by comparing the points of view held by incubation professionals working for migrant-specific vs. generalist incubators, who could be either novice or experts in working with migrant entrepreneurs.

The findings collected across France, Italy, and The Netherlands show an impressive number of similarities, despite the three countries involved in our research presenting many differences with respect both to the entrepreneurship and business ecosystem, and to immigration flows and regulations.

By comparing our interview data, we could identify **three points of view** about whether migrant and native entrepreneurs were perceived as different in respect to their knowledge, skills, motivations and mindsets compared to those of native entrepreneurs. The data revealed different points of view, that we discuss in the following as: (1) the “no difference” view; (2) the “exceptionalism” view; (3) the “gap” view.

- Some incubation professionals focus on entrepreneurial mindsets, knowledge and competences as the categorizing characteristics across their entrepreneurs; and therefore, if migrant entrepreneurs have the same perceived level of entrepreneurial exposure, they should not be treated differently from other local entrepreneurs. Moreover, those incubation professionals report that migrant entrepreneurs are able to quickly adapt and settle in the local environment due to their expertise as travellers and movers in different contexts, which endow them with international, cosmopolitan mindsets. These accounts suggest that incubation professionals displaying a “no difference” view tend to refer to categories of migrants who can be defined as “elites” – in that they either display cosmopolitan, international mindsets; they are able to fluently work in English; and/or they display good understanding of entrepreneurial language and tools.
- Some incubation professionals hold a positive view about migrants’ idiosyncratic opportunities and advantages. For instance, in Italy some respondents in generalist incubators emphasized that migrant entrepreneurs have a natural force, a “hunger” to realise their business idea, a commitment to succeed that drives them and that enriched the staff of the incubator as well. In France, professionals either working for generalist and migrant-specific incubators underlined that the diverse background of migrant entrepreneurs endowed them with unique opportunities. These insights point to an “exceptionalism” view, in that diversity (imagined or objective) might be source of inspiration and reflection also in light of the possible “reciprocity” in the relationships with entrepreneurs.
- Other incubation professionals, instead, perceive some “gaps” regarding their relations with migrants. Such gaps are three-dimensional, as they relate to (1) the understanding of methods, regulatory framework, or approach to the business world by migrant entrepreneurs; (2) a general cultural gap that is manifest in different worldviews, values, communication styles and expectations leading to stereotypes; and (3) migrant entrepreneurs’ “outsiderness” with respect to the host country’s networks and lack of competences.

Alongside how incubators view migrant entrepreneurs, the qualitative data of the interviews with both migrant-specific and generalist incubators allowed to identify the **different roles that incubators can take** with respect to either native or migrant entrepreneurs, which are then transformed into concrete services. Three roles emerged as key from our comparative analysis: entrepreneurial knowledge intermediation, network intermediation, and entrepreneurs' development.

- Incubators act as entrepreneurial knowledge intermediaries because they transfer to entrepreneurs ad-hoc knowledge in the entrepreneurship and business domain. Across the three countries, it is standard for generalist and migrant-specific incubators to either provide training, consulting, or mentoring on self-employment/entrepreneurship legal forms, project management, strategy, accountability, financial planning, market planning, marketing communication, negotiation, intellectual property rights, and human resources. However, the scope of this role depends on incubators' verticality and target, on entrepreneurs' needs and origin. In particular the national origin of the entrepreneurs might have an impact on the knowledge intermediation role that the incubator is required to have, because there is a strong side of country-level entrepreneurship and business specific knowledge that should be made available and comprehensible – also by an adequate translation – to migrant entrepreneurs.
- Incubators act as gatekeepers of local networks for all entrepreneurs, having the goal and the opportunities of intermediating the development of networks in several directions, in connection with customers, suppliers, financial institutions, and the wider ecosystem. In this sense, some professionals of incubation and acceleration programs describe themselves as “facilitators”: they aim to “*make things a little bit leaner, a little bit easier for basically everyone*”.
- Incubators act as developers: in generalist incubators, the staff aims at providing notions and hints on competences to enable entrepreneurs to “stand on their own feet and walk alone”, as well as support and assistance to make start-ups market ready or financially-economically sustainable. In migrant-specific incubators the development role of incubators acquires wider significance, being focused on raising awareness on the meaning and consequences of becoming entrepreneurs, providing psychological support, and empowering entrepreneurs with the provision of life skills.

Besides contents of activities, this research pointed to the critical role of understanding **how incubators do what they do**, highlighting the role of available incubation professionals' competences and their approach to entrepreneurs.

- Incubation professionals of generalist and migrant-specific incubators require both technical entrepreneurship- and business-related competences, necessarily complemented by soft and interpersonal skills for providing successful services to entrepreneurs. Indeed, the psychological and affective dimension of entertaining relationships with entrepreneurs was emphasised by several professionals. Generalist incubators might have wider needs for internal business and industry competences, brought in by the vertical expertise of each member of the staff and by external consultants. Incubation professionals working for migrant-specific initiatives, on the other hand, have competences that are often differentiated on the basis of their function in the incubation program: trainers master knowledge in technical topics; tutors and project managers have wider competences in the business and entrepreneurial domain, develop a broad vision on people's needs and competences, and need connection and coordination expertise to identify relevant external experts. Mentors have industry or technical expertise but require strong transversal competences.
- The interviews revealed different approaches in the way relationships are established between incubation professionals and entrepreneurs, which are strongly intertwined with the role covered by the incubator. Incubation professionals might emphasize technical, business-related contents in their relationships with entrepreneurs, taking a role of guidance in respect of the entrepreneurs' autonomy. Alternatively, the relationship could be oriented towards a more personal approach, which becomes educational in driving the personal development of entrepreneurs through entrepre-

neurial competences and tools – which become life skills. Both types of relations are important and have their own pros and cons. For migrant entrepreneurs, the risk of technical-centred relationships is that the individual's voice is not heard; the risk of personal-centred relationships lies in hidden power imbalances and “charitable assistentialism”.

We have demonstrated **where and how do incubation professionals access the knowledge and competences** that they then transmit to entrepreneurs: (1) internal staffing and training; (2) learning-by-doing; and (3) external sourcing.

- Internal staffing relies on diversity and training. Diversity in incubators' staff composition is key to procuring expertise and both hard and soft competences. However, none of the interviewed incubators reported to have implemented a policy for diversity and inclusion (D&I). In France and the Netherlands, there were some signs of cultural and ethnic/racial diversity in the incubators' staff, whereas in Italy none of the interviewed Italian incubators employed non-native Italians among their permanent staff. This might become a limit to serve migrant entrepreneurs because ethnic and cultural diversity within the team seems to be a driver for higher intercultural awareness and competences. No incubator in our interviews declared that the organization formalized organizational policies for training and professional development: there is a diffuse sense that the knowledge and competence required for incubation professionals are mostly acquired through peer or experiential learning. There might also be time or budget constraints to consider. While informal training prevails (e.g., peer discussion, personal study and reading), the interviews suggest that generalist incubation professionals mainly attend formal training on specific technical-business topics; migrant-specific incubation professionals more often attend training on transversal skills, especially linked to intercultural competences. However, quantitative data from the survey just supported the fact that migrant-specific incubators are less oriented to technical-business topics (i.e., both migrant-specific and generalist incubators attend the same contents for transversal competences).
- The importance of hands-on, practical experience and knowledge of the start-up world is emphasized as key for generalist incubators, who strive to be accountable to entrepreneurs from a technical-business point of view. Professionals working for migrant-specific incubators are less worried about technical-business domains but focus on practical experience and knowledge related to wider domains of knowledge, such as culture, psychology, or welfare. However, the results of the survey show that migrant-specific incubators are no different than generalist incubators in attending formal training in diversity and inclusion, and intercultural skills. Both these types of organizations engage in very few formal training activities in these areas, either given for granted that hands-on experience is enough (migrant-specific incubators); or not considering these contents for key training events (generalist incubators).
- Both generalist and migrant-specific incubators rely on the knowledge and competences provided by external consultants, trainers, and mentors to carry out their activities. When sourcing these figures, incubators strive to select them so as to maintain the alignment in terms of goals, teaching practices and styles with the incubator. This is particularly important for migrant-specific incubators, where the selection of appropriate external professionals should not only take into account their technical expertise, but also their interpersonal skills, mindsets, and capacity to adapt to the target audience.

6.2 Recommendations for incubation managers and professionals

There are a number of actionable recommendations that we offer to organizations and professionals involved in the education and training of (prospect) migrant entrepreneurs, including experts, incubation professionals, domestic and multinational corporations and

civil society organizations. We believe that there are ample opportunities for these actors to play a pivotal role in contributing to the national (and European) entrepreneurial ecosystem by providing resources, competencies, and networking opportunities, among other, which are of high value in the content of migrant entrepreneurship. We discuss them in the following and provide a summary in Table 10.

6.2.1 Training

The data collected, both through the interviews and the survey, revealed the need for increasing training opportunities for incubation professionals, both in terms of share of staff attending formal training activities per year; and number of hours of training. The interviews and the survey consistently pointed out that intercultural skills, diversity and inclusion, education in methodologies for appropriate coaching, tutoring and mentoring should be further broadened to better address migrant entrepreneurs' needs. The interviews, in addition, suggested that topics such as social innovation, social entrepreneurship, impact finance, microfinance, theory of change could be relevant for the business development of migrant entrepreneurs. Shared training moments can be organized by incubation professionals by partnering up with other actors in the ecosystem, and this would be particularly effective for the acquisition and development of soft and interpersonal skills, which are not strictly related to the core business of each incubator and accelerator.

6.2.2 Raising awareness

The interviews revealed that active and emphatic communication between incubation professionals and entrepreneurs solves potential misunderstandings and biased expectations from both sides. In the selection and onboarding process, incubation professionals should work more to understand the entrepreneurs' idiosyncratic motivations to start a business – that is to say to have reciprocal awareness of expectations, to identify the steps to undertake, and the related risks in starting a business. Moreover, incubation professionals revealed to have implicit cultural bias and a ethocentric view of the world, translating for instance in considering migrants either superstars, or refugees, or low-skilled individuals. Therefore, incubation professionals should work on recognizing stereotypes and raising awareness of implicit power dynamics in their relationships with different entrepreneurs, or among entrepreneurs in their programs, or among entrepreneurs and the surrounding ecosystem. This could be done through workshops and activities drawing on super-diversity views (Vertovec, 2007), intersectionality (Cho et al., 2013) and diversity and inclusion (Ely & Thomas, 2020).

6.2.3 Migrants' inclusion

Incubators, generalist and migrant-specific, could enlarge the participation of migrants through the co-design of programs and the co-delivery of programs. In this way, migrants would have their voice heard in terms of business and personal needs, not only in the theoretical but also practical sides of the programs.

Another possible solution is the presence of a work or occupational psychologist in incubation facilities, who can cover the topics of self-awareness, self-efficacy, and the construction of personal possibilities. With the support of a work or occupational psychologist, incubation professionals could better focus on the idiosyncratic aspect related to the motivations, personal competences and needs of aspiring entrepreneurs. This step could reduce the failure rate of incubation programs, revealed for instance by the propensity to abandon; or failure rate in the execution of business opportunity exploitation, revealed by financial and economic weaknesses, especially in periods of crisis.

TABLE 10. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCUBATION MANAGERS AND PROFESSIONALS

Category	Recommendations for incubation managers and professionals
TRAINING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase interest and opportunities for training, not only covering business-related contents, but also about transversal competences, such as intercultural skills, diversity and inclusion. • Increase interest and opportunities for ad-hoc training in methodologies for adult education, coaching, mentoring, and counselling. • Organize training sessions by partnering up with other actors in the ecosystem, so as to exploit diverse competences in terms of contents (e.g., business, finance, psychology, welfare, innovation, etc.) and methods.
RAISING AWARENESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the awareness of implicit biases (e.g., ethnocentrism, androcentrism) in incubators' management and staff. • Stimulate greater active listening and understanding of each entrepreneur's idiosyncratic motivations, perceived barriers, and relational needs with respect to the incubation service. • Organize dedicated sensitization or training sessions to stimulate awareness of power dynamics in the relationships with entrepreneurs and other actors in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, super-diversity of (migrant) entrepreneurs, intersectional nature of advantages and disadvantages for different entrepreneurs, management of diversity and inclusion in organizations.
MIGRANTS' INCLUSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlarge the participation of migrant entrepreneurs in the co-design and co-delivery of incubation programs, so as to have their voice heard and attended into theoretical and practical aspects. • Engage or hire specialists such as work or occupational psychologists, to assist both incubation professionals and entrepreneurs in progressing their business idea, or facing stressful moments. • Engage or hire specialists such as cultural mediators or cultural specialists, to assist both incubation professionals and entrepreneurs in adequately translating their knowledge and managing effective relationships.

6.3 Recommendations for policymakers

Over the last decade, policies to foster migrant entrepreneurship have mostly focused on creating support services for migrant entrepreneurs, especially focusing on strengthening their professionalization (e.g., competences and skills), rather than the opportunity structures and the environments in which they operate (Rath & Swagerman, 2016). In light of the increasing numbers of super-diverse migrants in Europe, there is a need to reinforce policies that could take into account the different motivations, timing, and entry points to entrepreneurship by migrants (e.g., students completing their studies, refugees, start-up visa holders, economic migrants), engage them and the local society, and including entrepreneurship in a wider agenda for local/international socio-economic development in the long term. In the following, some key recommendations are provided in this regard, and summarized in Table 11.

6.3.1 Sensitivity

To contribute to diversity and inclusion of migrants in entrepreneurial ecosystems, policymakers should acknowledge migrant entrepreneurship initiatives into official statistics. Migrants would then be recognised not only as an expense and cost for the European community, but also as a driver of economic and financial growth.

Policymakers should also be sensitive to possible downsides of entrepreneurship and immigration policies in terms of relational power dynamics in socio-economic environments. Migrant entrepreneurship policies should not be confused with welfare policies, although they could have the final, common aim of enhancing integration in the society. Policies should then address the strengthening of a shared culture in which migrants are a resource, and they feel valued as individuals.

6.3.2 Collaboration among the different actors

Coordinated efforts among incubation professionals themselves, with other actors in the entrepreneurial ecosystems (e.g., universities, investors, other business support services), and also in conjunction with public institutions, could lead to efficient and effective solutions to improve the available competences in incubators or the available training opportunities to develop them, with ultimate benefits on the migrant entrepreneurial opportunities. Indeed, the role of public institutions, particularly the governmental agencies at the national and supranational levels, could play a pivotal role in both coordinating the joint initiatives of incubation professionals and public institutions and providing financial support to make them happen. The field experience collected by this research also suggests that policymakers could engage with public and private actors coming from incubation and migrant entrepreneurship environments to give practical meaning to policies, and transform opportunities into reality in the view of more equality in the society.

6.3.3 Increased participation of migrants

Parallel to the inclusion of migrants in the designing and delivering processes of the business development path, generally increasing the participation of migrants in policy-making and funding decisions would give them voice to allow for transformative action. Policy initiatives should increasingly design appropriate mechanisms to ensure equitable accessibility to political and economic participation to different entrepreneurs, among which super-diverse migrant entrepreneurs.

TABLE 11. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

Category	Recommendations for policymakers
SENSITIVITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design appropriate statistical measurement of migrant entrepreneurship at the country-level, allowing to trace key data about entrepreneurs' individual characteristics (e.g., gender, education level, nationality) and company characteristics (e.g., migrants' equity share and board participation in the company, industry, location, etc.). • Sustain a positive narrative of migrant entrepreneurship as an opportunity and a contribution for host society, in terms of benefits accruing from greater diversity in entrepreneurial ecosystems. • Implement effective tools to sustain (migrant) entrepreneurs in terms of access to resources and ease to administrative requirements, by paying attention to specific barriers and needs linked to different status, power and networking positions. • Sustain training and sensitization initiatives about diversity and inclusion, intercultural management, methodological aspects for adult education, targeting incubators' managers and professionals, together with other actors in the entrepreneurial ecosystems.
COLLABORATION AMONG DIFFERENT ACTORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustain local and international networking and coordinated action among all the different actors involved in delivering services aiming at migrants' integration, among which incubation providers. • Sustain local and international networking and coordinated action among all the actors involved in providing education and training opportunities for entrepreneurs and migrants. • Strengthen connections between actors in local entrepreneurial ecosystems and actors located in foreign entrepreneurial ecosystems, also exploiting and valorizing migrants' networks .
INCREASED PARTICIPATION OF MIGRANTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustain migrants' participation in policymaking and funding decisions, so as to give them voice for transformative action. • Design entrepreneurial policy mechanisms to ensure equitable access to opportunities for political and economic participation for diverse entrepreneurs. • Favor the creation of ad-hoc associations and unions to represent different needs of different entrepreneurs in policymaking institutions.

7. REFERENCES

Atelier Parisien d'Urbanisme (2016). *Les entrepreneurs étrangères à Paris*. Paris: APUR and Mairie de Paris.

Available at: https://www.apur.org/sites/default/files/documents/entrepreneurs_etran-gers_paris.pdf, accessed 20 September 2021.

Bolzani, D. (2021). *Migrant Entrepreneurship. Emerging themes and interpretations with insights from Italy*. Emerald Publishing Limited, Bingley.

Bolzani, D., & Boari, C. (2018). Evaluations of export feasibility by domestic immigrant and non-immigrant entrepreneurs in new technology-based firms. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship* 16, 176–209.

Bonifazi, C. (2000). European migration policy: questions from Italy. In *Eldorado or Fortress? Migration in Southern Europe* (pp. 235-252). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Cho, S., Crenshaw, K. W., & McCall, L. (2013). Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis. *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society*, 38(4), 785-810.

Ely, R. J., & Thomas, D. A. (2020). Getting Serious About Diversity: Enough Already with the Business Case. *Harvard Business Review*. November.

Entreprendre (2021, July 1). *Les étrangers participent à 15% dans la création d'entreprise en France*. Available at: <https://www.entreprendre.fr/les-etran-gers-partici-pent-a-15-dans-la-creation-dentreprise-en-france/>, accessed 20 September 2021.

European Commission (2016). *Evaluation and Analysis of Good Practices in Promoting and Supporting Migrant Entrepreneurship. GuideBook*. European Commission, Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, Directorate F – Innovation and Advanced Manufacturing, Unit F.2—Clusters, Social Economy and Entrepreneurship.

Instituut voor Multiculturele Vraagstukken (2014, March). *De economische bijdrage van etnisch ondernemerschap*. <https://www.kis.nl/sites/default/files/10/Etnisch-ondernemerschap-forum.pdf>

King, R. (2000). Southern Europe in the changing global map of migration. In *Eldorado or Fortress? Migration in Southern Europe* (pp. 3-26). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

OECD (2019). *The Missing Entrepreneurs 2019*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Rath, J., & Swagerman, A. (2016). Promoting ethnic entrepreneurship in European cities: Sometimes ambitious, mostly absent, rarely addressing structural features. *International Migration*, 54(1), 152-166.

Vertovec, S. (2007). Super-diversity and its implications. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 30(6), 1024-1054.

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2020). *International Migration 2020 Highlights* (ST/ESA/SER.A/452). New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division.

Available at: https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/undes_a_pd_2020_international_migration_highlights.pdf, accessed 20 September 2021.

Unioncamere (2018). *Imprese: quelle di stranieri verso quota 600mila (+3.4% nel 2017)*.

Available at: <http://www.unioncamere.gov.it/P42A3653C160S123/impres--quelle-di-stranieri-verso-quota-600mila---3-4--nel-2017-.htm>, accessed 1 June 2020.



Co-founded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



MIG.EN.CUBE – Fostering MIGrant ENTrepreneurship inCUBation in Europe is an Erasmus+ project led by the University of Bologna (Italy) (P.I. Dr. Daniela Bolzani), involving the University of Amsterdam (The Netherlands), Institut Supérieur de Gestion (France), Fondazione Grameen (Italy), Impact Hub Amsterdam (The Netherlands), Place Network (France), Impact Hub Company (Austria), and Migration Policy Group (Belgium). It also counts on the support by UNCTAD as an Associate Partner.

MIG.EN.CUBE is set to take into account the current critical issues in fostering migrant entrepreneurship in Europe, characterized by a fragmentation of incubation programs targeting migrant entrepreneurs, the diversity of actors that provide incubation activities, a strong focus on the “demand side” (i.e., migrant entrepreneurs) but a lack of training opportunities and exchange of best practices for incubation professionals targeting this group, and the super-diversity of (would-be) migrant entrepreneurs.

The project thus seeks to enhance the knowledge and competences of diverse incubation professionals dealing with super-diverse entrepreneurs or aspiring entrepreneurs, so as to foster the opportunities for migrant entrepreneurs to learn and experience how to start and grow a successful business. Specifically, MIG.EN.CUBE aims at:

- (1) increasing the understanding of specific incubation needs of migrant entrepreneurs and of the competences required for incubation professionals working with them;
- (2) systematizing and sharing best practices for innovative incubation programs for migrants across Europe, and in particular in France, Italy, and The Netherlands;
- (3) providing incubation professionals with new, tried-and-tested materials and tools for advising, training, performing, and assessing incubation for migrant entrepreneurs.

The project will strengthen the efficacy of support programs linking entrepreneurship and migration, focusing on the development of relevant high-quality knowledge and competences for operators in the supply-side and policy-makers. Its outputs will consist in the report “Synoptic Scan of available incubators for migrants”, the report “Diagnostic assessment of incubation professionals’ training needs” (September 2021), an “Incubating Migrant Entrepreneurs” MOOC (February 2023) and an “Inclusive Incubator” Guidebook (February 2023).

Website: <http://mig-en-cube.unibo.it>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/mig-en-cube/>

PROJECT PARTNERS



GRAMEEN ITALIA
FONDAZIONE



PLACE

