**A supportive ecosystem**

In recent decades, impressive efforts have been deployed to document and systematise best practices in supporting migrant entrepreneurship. However most of the cases and programmes so far described deal with migrants and refugees who have already been in their new countries of residence for a significant period. Little has yet been done to describe or analyse initiatives to support newly-arrived migrants, refugees and legal new status holders. Their plight may be expected to be quite different from that of those who have already settled in their host countries; therefore, a specific target approach may be warranted.

The consensus among practitioners is that providing effective support for migrant entrepreneurs depends on establishing a comprehensive ecosystem of support services for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) which pays due attention and provides proper services for this target group. Previous studies, including the work of COPIE,[[1]](#footnote-1) the transnational *Community of Practice on Inclusive Entrepreneurship* which formed part of the EQUAL programme, the EU Studies on Ethnic Migrant Entrepreneurship 2008,[[2]](#footnote-2) the OECD work on inclusive entrepreneurship for disadvantaged and underrepresented groups,[[3]](#footnote-3) and the UNHCR/SPTF study of 2016[[4]](#footnote-4) show that the necessary components of an ecosystem to support migrant entrepreneurship are:

* an entrepreneurial culture
* a policy environment conducive to promoting and facilitating (migrant) entrepreneurship
* outreach to migrant communities and linking them to mainstream organisations
* branding and signposting so that prospective and existing entrepreneurs can easily identify sources of help
* a menu of services including:
  + counselling, coaching and mentoring
  + training
  + workspace
  + networking among businesses
  + access to finance
  + the possibility of mainstreaming specific migrant entrepreneurship development and promotion programmes

Building a culture supportive of entrepreneurship, which involves work by governments on the education system and promoting awareness in society of the added value of entrepreneurs, is a medium-term task. The most critical support factors that can be influenced in the short term are **access to business development services** and **access to finance.** Depending on the type of economic activity sought by the migrant entrepreneur, an appropriate and balanced offer of finance and business development services is needed, and global consensus is that neither of those can be offered on its own.

We therefore propose to start by establishing Communities of Practice in these two areas. These CoPs will sort the fragmented provision into meaningful clusters. They will be open to additional members and as such new members can join over the course of the project, and strands of co-operation developed will in turn spawn further networks/CoPs. These will avoid duplication of effort and offer economies of scale through mutual learning and exchange in a network of networks.

A third, supporting CoP dealing with **associations of migrant entrepreneurs** will be established and will aim to strengthen the support they give, from two angles: first by professionalising the services they provide, and reciprocally by improving the diversity management practiced by mainstream entrepreneur support organisations such as chambers of commerce and traditional SME associations.

During the execution of the project it may prove desirable and possible to establish further Communities of Practice on other themes. For instance, an area that has not yet been explored is the use of new (alternative) forms of financing such as crowdfunding,[[5]](#footnote-5) timebanks, social impact bonds[[6]](#footnote-6) and European social entrepreneurship funds[[7]](#footnote-7) (EuSEFs) to render financial services to the new groups of migrants and refugees. EMEN will pay attention to this as well.

**Mechanisms for expansion and replication**

The project will allow migrant entrepreneurship support service providers to innovate and expand the services they offer, which can take place through three routes:

1. broadening of the scope of services offered (service development and supply-chain integration);
2. broadening of the target groups served (new client groups in the same place);
3. replication of initiatives in new locations (similar clients in new places).

The project will enable migrant entrepreneurship support organisations to interact so as to improve the service they are able to provide through a number of mechanisms. These include:

* the assembling and publishing of information resources to help initiatives to improve their performance;an information line available through the Internet and social media;
* the identification of complementary partners and the exchange of knowledge and know- how;
* the establishment of consortia among support schemes to provide joint services;
* the creation of social franchises involving the codification of an existing successful common business model, the creation of an identity or label and quality standards, and the transfer of know-how to new enterprises.[[8]](#footnote-8)

1. [http://www.cop-ie.eu](http://www.cop-ie.eu/) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. IMES, FACET (2008) Entrepreneurial Diversity in a Unified Europe, Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship and Migrant Entrepreneurship [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. OECD (2014) Policy Brief on Access to Business Start-up Finance for Inclusive Entrepreneurship [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. UNHCR Social Performance Task Force (2016) Serving Refugee Populations: the next financial inclusion frontier [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See [http://ec.europa.eu/finance/general-policy/docs/crowdfunding/160428-crowdfunding-](http://ec.europa.eu/finance/general-policy/docs/crowdfunding/160428-crowdfunding-study_en.pdf) [study\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/finance/general-policy/docs/crowdfunding/160428-crowdfunding-study_en.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/EPRS/538223-Social-impact-bonds-FINAL.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See [http://ec.europa.eu/finance/investment/docs/venture\_capital/160714-impact-](http://ec.europa.eu/finance/investment/docs/venture_capital/160714-impact-assessment_en.pdf) [assessment\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/finance/investment/docs/venture_capital/160714-impact-assessment_en.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See European Social Franchising network website at <http://www.socialfranchising.coop/> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)