

# **The competences available in entrepreneurial support organizations: Dealing with the challenges and opportunities of migrants' diversity**

## **ABSTRACT**

The rise of entrepreneurial support organizations (ESOs) reflects a growing focus on nurturing entrepreneurs. However, despite significant investments, the literature about the impacts of ESOs is contradictory, suggesting that several boundary conditions affect the relationship between assistance offered by ESOs and entrepreneurial success of assisted targets. We suggest that, increasingly, the issue of effective entrepreneurial support can be found by focusing on 'who gets supported by whom and how.' Our study examines what competences are perceived as needed by ESO professionals for working with aspiring or established entrepreneurs, in light of the challenges and opportunities offered by the growing cultural and racial diversity in entrepreneurial ecosystems. We investigate ESOs across different European countries, employing a mixed-methods approach drawing on 48 qualitative interviews and 105 survey responses. This study's goal is to identify the competences that are perceived as being more relevant for incubation professionals, and whether these competences differ to approach migrant or native entrepreneurs; and how are such competences acquired by incubators. The findings contribute to generate theoretical and practical/policy insights about the characteristics and conditions upon which entrepreneurial support initiatives are built.

Key words: migrant entrepreneurs, incubators, competences

## INTRODUCTION

The interest in the role of entrepreneurial support organizations, such as incubators and accelerators, for entrepreneurial learning and start-up development has grown exponentially over the last decade (e.g., Yu, 2020; Lasrado, Sivo, Ford, O'Neal, & Garibay, 2016; Cohen, Fehder, Hochberg, & Murray, 2019). Given the public and private resources channelled into entrepreneurial support, the existing literature has tried to produce evidence about the benefits for entrepreneurs and early-stage ventures. However, many of the results have been mixed. On the one side, some studies have found that entrepreneurship support in contexts such as incubators or accelerators is conducive to the establishment of firms (e.g., Breznitz & Zhang, 2021) or better firm performance (e.g., Assenova, 2020). On the other side, studies have found that start-ups receiving support perform worse (e.g., Yu, 2020; Lukes, Longo & Zouhar, 2019) or close down earlier and more often (e.g., Schwartz, 2009).

The inconsistency of results suggests that there might be some boundary conditions that influence how successful is a support program. Scholars have recently moved towards a more fine-grained understanding of the conditions under which these initiatives are run, looking at both the supply-side of these initiatives, for instance in terms of processes at play (e.g., Cohen et al., 2019) or the skills of involved staff (e.g., Assenova, 2020); and the demand-side of these initiatives, for instance in terms of characteristics of served entrepreneurs (e.g., Assenova, 2020; Harima, Freudenberg & Halberstadt, 2020).

In this paper, we embrace this more fine-grained approach to studying the environments that entrepreneurs encounter in business support organizations, such as incubators or accelerators. We follow the idea that we should not focus on the “whether or not” the entrepreneurial team and its business have been supported; but rather “who is getting supported by whom and how”. As an example of this approach, Assenova (2020) found that disadvantaged entrepreneurs matched with high-ability mentors gain higher managerial knowledge, revenue and profitability growth with respect to the ones matched with low-ability mentors; and that entrepreneurs’ pre-entry knowledge negatively moderated these impacts. Given our interest in the “who and how” of entrepreneurial support, we specifically focus on the competences of professionals in entrepreneurial support initiatives, by investigating (1) what are the competences that they perceive as more relevant in their work with (aspiring) entrepreneurs, and (2) whether these competences differ to approach migrant or native entrepreneurs; and (3) how do they acquire such competences.

We study the context of incubation initiatives in Europe, where very different entrepreneurial ecosystems and migratory flows coexist (GEDI, 2022; OECD, 2019). We employ a mixed-method design, employing both qualitative methods (i.e., interviews with 48 incubation professionals) and quantitative methods (i.e., an online survey collecting 105 complete responses by incubation professionals).

This study reveals three key methods for competence acquisition in incubation professionals: internal staffing, learning-by-doing, and external sourcing. While informal training and practical experience are prevalent, a lack of formal diversity and inclusion (D&I) policies and limited staff diversity may hinder support for migrant entrepreneurs. While all incubators rely on external expertise, incubators specifically focused on serving migrant entrepreneurs do not seem to prioritize cultural competency alongside technical skills. Overall, formalized training and a more diverse workforce are crucial for incubation programs to effectively empower a wider range of entrepreneurs.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Migrant entrepreneurship**

Though human migration is a historical constant, contemporary nations grapple with integrating immigrants and refugees (Manning & Trimmer, 2020). Europe, facing demographic shifts, actively seeks skilled migrants to bolster knowledge-based economies (Schittenhelm & Schmidtke, 2011). The new EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2021-2027) acknowledges that Member States hold primary responsibility for integration policies, even if the EU has established a range of measures to support national, regional, and local initiatives promoting integration (European Commission, 2021). Among these actions, the plan explicitly emphasizes supporting entrepreneurship to "improve employment opportunities and skills recognition"<sup>1</sup>. This approach aims to ensure that migrants are fully valued and empowered to reach their entrepreneurial potential.

To date, migrant entrepreneurship is becoming a relevant structural factor in developed economies, for instance in OECD countries and the European Union where, on average, 12% of migrants are self-employed (OECD/European Union, 2015). The most recent approaches to migrant entrepreneurs and their firms have framed them as “super-diverse” (e.g., Ram, Jones,

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/home\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/home_en)

Edwards, Kiselincev, Muchenje & Woldesenbet, 2013; Kloosterman, Rusinovic & Yeboah, 2016), including a variety of legal forms and product/market combinations. Migrant entrepreneurship thus might be observed in vacancy chains, expanding or abandoned niches (e.g., Kloosterman, 2010); meeting the needs of a specific ethnic community (e.g., so called ethnic products or services), often through informal business activities (e.g., Ramadani, Dana, Ratten & Bexheti, 2018), or exploiting opportunities offered by the “enclave economy” (for a review, Zhou, 2004); entering as low-cost suppliers of standardized parts into supply chains (e.g., the Chinese migrant entrepreneurs in Prato, Ceccagno, 2009; Guercini, Dei Ottati, Baldassar & Johanson, 2017); or operating into mainstream markets (Waldinger, Aldrich & Ward, 1990), such as into “post-industrial/high-skilled” markets (Kloosterman, 2010) related to technical, financial, legal and administrative advisory services (e.g., Bolzani, 2021). Indeed, all these different manifestations of migrant entrepreneurship can easily generate a fragmented landscape in terms of differentiated needs for business support – and different actors who can provide it, often implying forms of categorizing and labelling entrepreneurs (Hoegbergm Schölin, Ram & Jones, 2016).

### **Entrepreneurial support organizations**

Over the last decades, a growing number of public and private initiatives aimed at improving entrepreneurs’ odds of success have been launched (e.g., Audretsch, Colombelli, Grilli, Minola, & Rasmussen, 2020). The different forms of entrepreneurial support have been recently described as the “provision of valuable resources to entrepreneurs by individuals or organizations, which carry structured activities to facilitate the imminent establishment of a new independent firm, increase survival chances, or promote long-term growth” (Ratinho, Amezcua, Honig & Zeng, 2020, p. 2).

Incubators and accelerators have been identified as two key actors in the range of entrepreneurial support organizations, which are organizations “whose primary purpose is to support individuals and collectives, through (in)direct and (im)material assistance, as they seek to initiate and progress through the stages of the entrepreneurial process.” (Bergman & McMullen, 2021, p. 3). Incubators target entrepreneurs at pre-venture or venture infancy stages, providing physical space and resources, administrative support, networking, and workshops/training. Accelerators target ventures at infancy or early growth stage, providing

physical space, administrative support, curriculum/mentoring, financial capital and graduation events (Bergman & McMullen, 2021).

While several studies have shown that incubators and accelerators can provide a range of services to aid individuals in starting a venture, there are mixed empirical results about their success and about the type of support that they can offer, especially in terms of relational support (e.g., coaching, mentoring or other helping relationships) (Bergman & McMullen, 2021). In addition, available literature has not fully addressed the diversity of entrepreneurs, since most of the existing studies on business support organizations have focused on highly skilled entrepreneurs in Western countries (Assenova, 2020), or on disadvantaged entrepreneurs in Southern countries (e.g., Anderson, Chandy & Zia, 2018; Dutt, Hawn, Vidal, Chatterji, McGahan & Mitchell, 2016; Assenova, 2020). As reviewed by Serpente, Martinelli, and Bolzani (2024), a small but growing literature has recently emerged with respect to entrepreneurial support to migrant entrepreneurs, including support from the government, the environment, entrepreneurial programs and incubators, financiers and investors, social networks with other firms, and also civil society and social economy organizations. However, there remains a gap in the available knowledge about the competences upon which these supports can form their initiatives, how such competences are acquired, and what could eventually be improved to take into account the variety of support needs of diverse entrepreneurs (e.g., Rath & Swagerman, 2016; Solano, Wolffhardt & Xhani, 2019).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Study context**

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. 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, 2000). For this study, we have collected data from three European countries which are very heterogeneous in terms of migration and entrepreneurship environment: France, Italy and the Netherlands.

These three countries display different ecosystems for innovation and entrepreneurship, even if governments have recently employed several similar policies to foster them. For instance, according to the Global Entrepreneurship Index developed by the Global Entrepreneurship and Development Institute<sup>2</sup>, the United States rank first in the list of countries in terms of its entrepreneurial ecosystem, based on the evaluation of 14 “pillars” 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 10<sup>th</sup>, the Netherlands rank 11<sup>th</sup> (after countries such as the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Australia) and Italy ranks 42<sup>nd</sup> (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.

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). 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 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). The three countries present a lower proportion of migrant entrepreneurs born in another European member state if compared to the EU average (OECD, 2019). With respect to migrant entrepreneurs born outside

---

<sup>2</sup> The 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.

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.

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.

## **Data collection**

We collected data based on two steps. The first step was to build a qualitative database based on in-depth interviews with a total of 48 incubators, which serve a variety of entrepreneurs' profiles, among which also migrants. To this end, we first produced a list of all the incubators in each country, based on manual search on the Internet, use of available listings, and referrals from industry/entrepreneurship experts and professors. For each incubator, we carried out a desk research to collect information about the year of foundation, governance structure, business model, main goals, services provided, and target groups. It is important to underline that we have identified “migrant-focused” incubators, who exclusively focus on migrants; and

“generalist” incubators, who do not declare a specific target group (and therefore could also serve migrant entrepreneurs). We then designed a selection grid so that we could invite for interviews those incubators ensuring heterogeneity across the following dimensions: governance structure (i.e., private vs. public vs. mixed), services provided (i.e., pre-incubation training, incubation, acceleration and seed investing), and target group (i.e., migrant-focused vs. generalist). All the incubators were contacted by the research team, via email or telephone, to ask participation in the study.

In France, 16 incubators agreed to have semi-structured interviews, conducted online in English and French. 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 born in 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 1 provides an overview of the interviewed incubators in France. 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 manuscript but replaced with a code.

**Table 1 – Overview of French interviewed incubators**

	<b>Foundation year</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Legal status</b>	<b>Number of full-time employees</b>
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

In The Netherlands, 12 incubators agreed to take part in scheduled online interviews during around 60 minutes. With the consent of the participants, the interviews were recorded and transcribed in full. Table 2 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.

**Table 2 – Overview of Dutch interviewed incubators**

	<b>Foundation Year</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Legal status</b>	<b>Number of full-time employees</b>
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

In Italy, 20 incubators were interviewed, as shown in Table 3. The interviews were held on online platforms 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 3 – Overview of Italian interviewed incubators**

	<b>Foundation year</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Legal status</b>	<b>Number of full-time employees</b>
ITAMIG#1	2003	South, North Italy	Social impact	Public	0-5
ITAMIG#2	2019	North Italy	Social impact, Cultural/creative	Mixed	0-5
ITAMIG#3	2011	South Italy	Social impact, Cultural/creative	Private	10-20
ITAMIG#4	2019	North Italy	General	Mixed	10-20
ITAMIG#5	2018	North Italy	General	Mixed	0-5
ITAMIG#6	1991	Central Italy	Social impact, Cultural/creative	Public	5-10
ITAGEN#1	2014	South Italy	High Tech	Private	5-10
ITAGEN#2	2011	North Italy	Social impact	Private	5-10
ITAGEN#3	2016	South Italy	General	Private	0-5
ITAGEN#4	2010	North Italy	General	Mixed	0-5
ITAGEN#5	2003	North, Central and South Italy	High Tech	Private	10-20
ITAGEN#6	2020	North Italy	High Tech	Private	0-5
ITAGEN#7	2015	North Italy	Biotech/healthcare, Other	Private	5-10
ITAGEN#8	2005	North Italy and Islands	General	Private	0-5
ITAGEN#9	1999	North Italy	High Tech	Mixed	10-20
ITAGEN#10	2006	North Italy	High Tech, Biotech/healthcare, Public sector, Cultural/creative	Public	0-5
ITAGEN#11	1991	Central Italy	Biotech/healthcare, Cultural/creative, Other	Mixed	30-50
ITAGEN#12	2013	Central Italy	General	Private	5-10
ITAGEN#13	2015	North Italy	Social impact	Private	0-5
ITAGEN#14	2016	North Italy	High Tech, Sport	Private	0-5

The second step of our research was to build a quantitative dataset, based on an online survey to collect wider information about the competences and training needs of incubation professionals. The survey was implemented in Italian, French and English and distributed to all the mapped incubators in Italy, France, and the Netherlands. The survey was fully completed by 105 respondents across France (n=20), Italy (n=50), The Netherlands (n=19), but also “travelled” across the respondents’ contact to other professionals in other European countries (e.g., Spain, Hungary, Poland, and others, n=16).

## FINDINGS FROM QUALITATIVE DATA

Our interviews were very insightful to answer our research questions about (1) what are the competences that incubation professionals perceive as more relevant in their work with (aspiring) entrepreneurs, and (2) whether these competences differ to approach migrant or native entrepreneurs; and (3) how do they acquire such competences.

### **Competences of incubation professionals, with a view on migrants' diversity**

Incubation professionals 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, as for these contents they can rely on external experts. Yet, incubator's staff 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 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.

All the interviewed professionals emphasized the importance to have soft and interpersonal skills for successfully serve 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)*

We specifically inquired whether working with migrant entrepreneurs would require additional competences, and several respondents emphasized the specific need of transversal competences, such as: 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 – like refugees or asylum seekers.

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. These professionals 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:

*[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-focused 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.

### **Acquiring competences for incubators**

Our interviews investigated where and how do incubators access the knowledge and competences that they then transmit to entrepreneurs. Our data suggested four patterns: (1) internal staffing and training; (2) learning-by-doing; and (3) external sourcing.

*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-focused 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).

#### *Learning-by-doing.*

Through our interviews, we discovered that not all incubators provide training to their staff, nor have formalised organisational policies for learning and continuing 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, 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-focused incubators reported more often training on transversal skills, especially linked to intercultural competences.

*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-focused 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 such as psychology, culture, and education. Moreover, according to several interviews with social or migrant-focused 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.

*External sourcing.* Generalist and migrant-focused 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-focused 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 (ITAMIG0#3).*

## **FINDINGS FROM QUANTITATIVE DATA**

In the sample derived from our survey, 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%).

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 incubators have no "vertical" industry specialization (59%). There are no statistically significant industry differences between migrant-focused 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

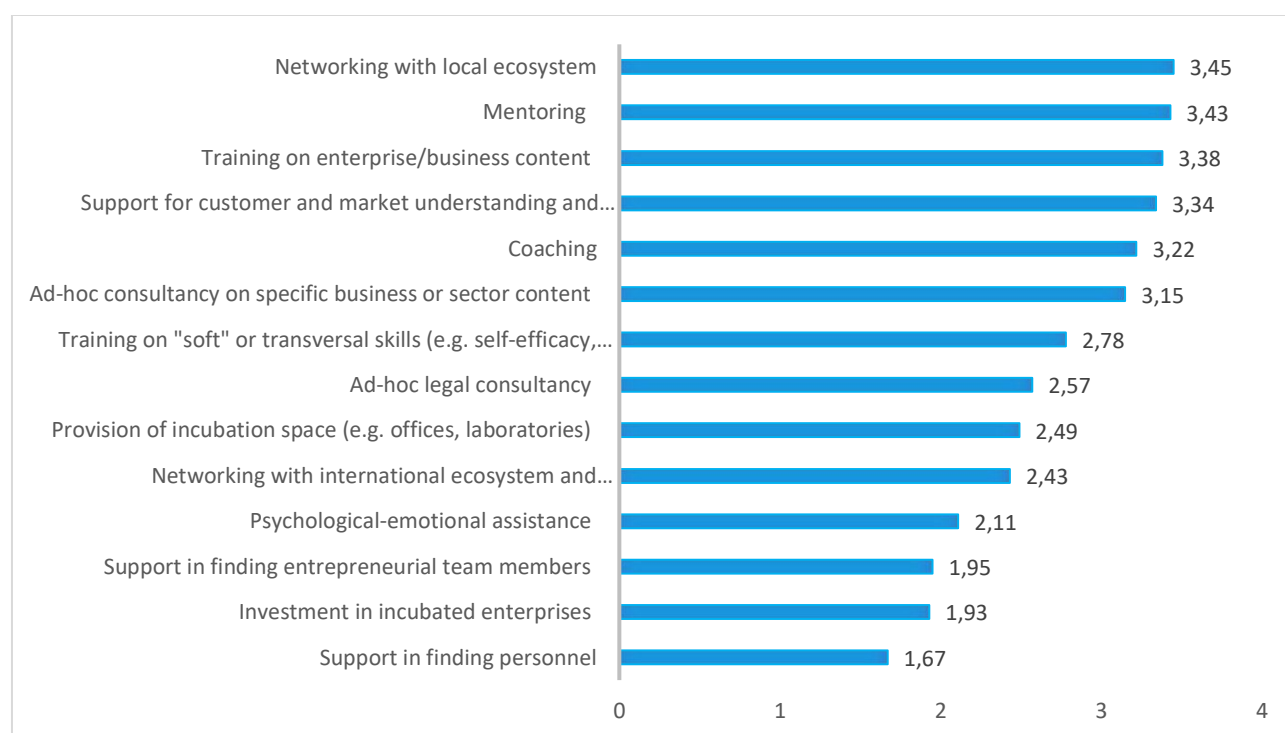
the sponsor; 20% propose either more programs per year or customized programs; and 9% offer a mix of the three above.

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.

Among the sampled incubators, 33% declared that they never had migrants among the participants to the incubation program. 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 reaching out to any type migrant entrepreneurs. Instead, social incubators displayed a higher propensity to have served first-generation migrant entrepreneurs than non-social ones (61% vs. 31% respectively).

The respondents 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 1, respondents 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, which results statistically more important in the answers provided by migrant-focused incubators. This is in line with the qualitative findings, where interviewees declared that this service has a role in including migrant entrepreneurs. Conversely, migrant-focused incubators 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.

**Figure 1 – Managers' evaluation of key activities for sampled incubators**



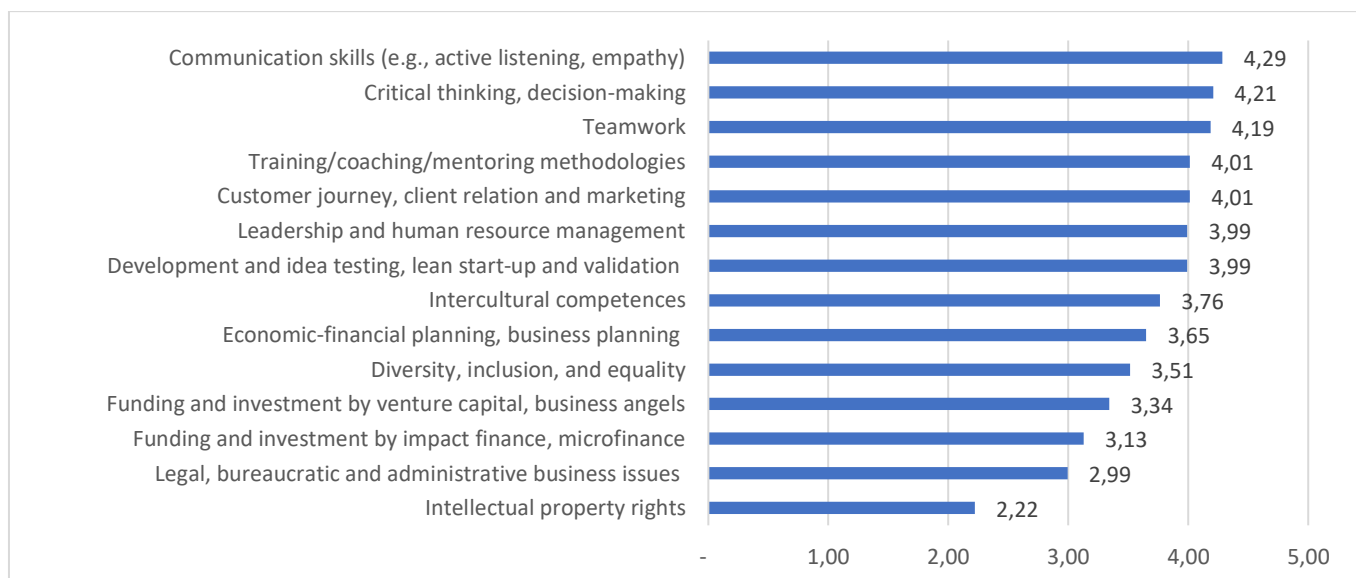
With respect to training activities focused on enterprise/business contents, the privileged topics regard economic and financial planning (53%) and pitching (52%), followed by marketing (47%), basics of entrepreneurship (48%), communication (44%), and lastly by legal and bureaucratic information on business creation and management (39%). There are no statistical differences between migrant-focused and generalist incubators. Incubators that carry out training on soft skills mainly provide it by internal staff (65%), followed by external trainers (39%) or alumni of the incubator (28%).

### **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 2 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

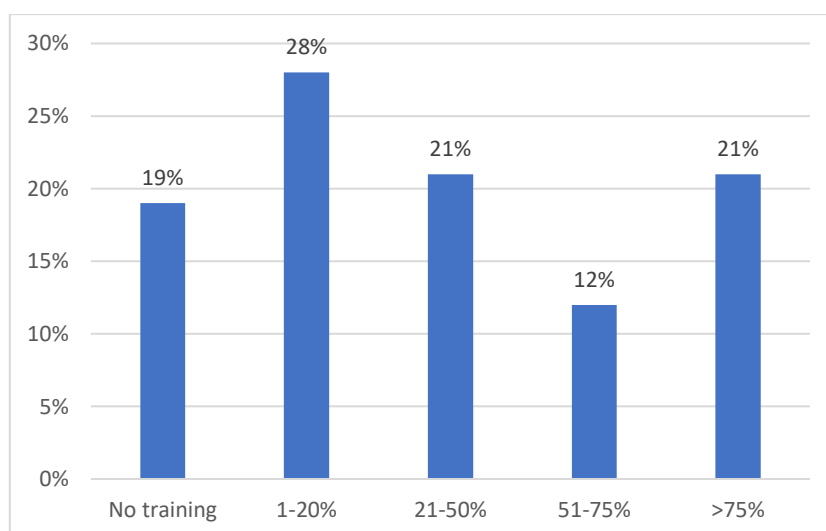
instead less competent in intellectual property rights; and legal, administrative and bureaucratic contents – which in fact the qualitative part of the work indicated as possessed by external specialists. No difference in these competences were found among migrant-focused and generalist incubators.

**Figure 2 – Surveyed incubation professionals’ evaluation of their competences**



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 3, 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- vs. generalist incubators.

**Figure 3 – Share of incubator’s staff who attend formal training activities per year**

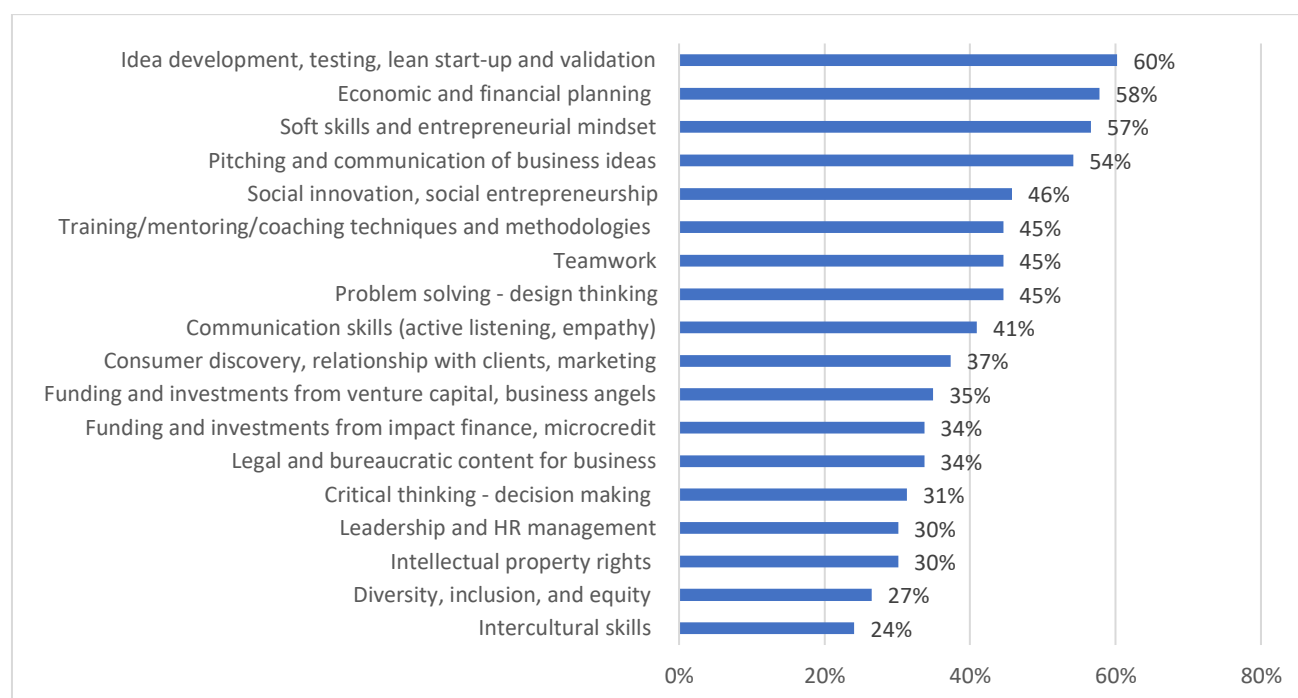


In case the incubators’ staff participate to any formal training, the majority of them carry out up to 10 hours of training per year (52%). Incubators that are “low formal training” are also slightly less engaged in longer training periods (47% carrying out up to 10 hours of training vs. 45% of “high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

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 4, 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 4 – Contents of formal training activities per year in surveyed incubators**



Additional analyses reveal that migrant-focused 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%).

## CONCLUSION

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first available study about the competences available at incubators, in an European context, which takes into account the increasing request for diverse competences to address the diversity of migrants' entrepreneurs.

Incubation professionals 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. Our study has shown that, due to their business models, 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-focused 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 entrepreneurial 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 shown that incubators access the knowledge and competences via internal staffing and training; learning-by-doing; and 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 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 diffused 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-focused 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-focused incubators are



less oriented to technical-business topics (i.e., both migrant-focused 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-focused 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-focused 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-focused incubators); or not considering these contents for key training events (generalist incubators).

Both generalist and migrant-focused 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-focused 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.

## REFERENCES

- Anderson, S.J., Chandy, R., & Zia, B. (2018). Pathways to profits: The impact of marketing vs. finance skills on business performance. *Management Science*, 64(12), 5559–5583.
- Assenova, V. A. (2020). Early-stage venture incubation and mentoring promote learning, scaling, and profitability among disadvantaged entrepreneurs. *Organization Science*, 31(6), 1560-1578.
- Audretsch, D., Colombelli, A., Grilli, L., Minola, T., & Rasmussen, E. (2020). Innovative start-ups and policy initiatives. *Research Policy*, 49(10).
- Bergman, B. J., & McMullen, J. S. (2022). Helping entrepreneurs help themselves: A review and relational research agenda on entrepreneurial support organizations. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 46(3), 688-728.
- Bolzani, D. (2021). *Migrant Entrepreneurship*. Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-83867-491-520211003>
- Bolzani, D. & Boari, C. (2018). Evaluations of export feasibility by immigrant and non-immigrant entrepreneurs in new technology-based firms. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, 16(2), 176-209. DOI: 10.1007/s10843-017-0217-0
- Bonifazi, C. (2000). European migration policy: questions from Italy. In *Eldorado or Fortress? Migration in Southern Europe* (pp. 235-252). Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Breznitz, S.M. & Zhang, Q. (2022). Entrepreneurship education and firm creation, *Regional Studies*, 56:6, 940-955, DOI: 10.1080/00343404.2021.1878127
- Ceccagno, A. (2009). Chinese migrants as apparel producers in an era of perishable global fashion: new fashion scenarios in Prato, Italy. In G. Johanson, R. Smyth, & R. French, R. (Eds.), *Living Outside the Walls: The Chinese in Prato* (pp. 42-74). Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Cambridge.
- Cohen, S., Fehder, D.C., Hochberg, Y.V., & Murray, F. (2019). The design of startup accelerators. *Research Policy*, 48(7), 1781–1797.
- Dutt, N., Hawn, O., Vidal, E., Chatterji, A., McGahan, A., & Mitchell, W. (2016). How open system intermediaries address institutional failures: The case of business incubators in emerging-market countries. *Academy of Management Journal*, 59(3), 818–840. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2012.0463>
- 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.
- Guercini, S., Dei Ottati, G., Baldassar, L., & Johanson, G. (2017). *Native and Immigrant Entrepreneurship*. Springer, London.
- Harima, A., Freudenberg, J., & Halberstadt, J. (2020). Functional domains of business incubators for refugee entrepreneurs. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*, 14(5), 687-711.
- Högberg, L., Schölin, T., Ram, M., & Jones, T. (2016). Categorising and labelling entrepreneurs: Business support organisations constructing the Other through prefixes of ethnicity and immigrantship. *International Small Business Journal*, 34(3), 242-260. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242614555877>
- Istituto Cattaneo (2019). Che programmi avete per le Europee? Un'analisi dei programmi elettorali dei partiti. Available at: <http://www.cattaneo.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Analisi-Istituto-Cattaneo-Elezioni-europee-2019-I-programmi-elettorali-dei-partiti.pdf>, accessed 1 June 2020.
- 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.
- Kloosterman, R. C. (2010). Matching opportunities with resources: A framework for analysing (migrant) entrepreneurship from a mixed embeddedness perspective. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 22(1), 25-45.
- Kloosterman, R. C., Rusinovic, K., & Yeboah, D. (2016). Super-diverse migrants—similar trajectories? Ghanaian entrepreneurship in the Netherlands seen from a Mixed Embeddedness perspective. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 42(6), 913-932.
- Lasrado, V., Sivo, S., Ford, C., O'Neal, T., & Garibay, I. (2016). Do graduated university incubator firms benefit from their relationship with university incubators? *Journal of Technology Transfer*, 41(2), 205–219.
- Lukeš, M., Longo, M. C., & Zouhar, J. (2019). Do business incubators really enhance entrepreneurial growth? Evidence from a large sample of innovative Italian start-ups. *Technovation*, 82, 25-34.
- Manning, P., & Trimmer, T. (2020). *Migration in World History* (3rd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351256681>
- OECD/EU (2015). Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015: Settling In, OECD Publishing, Paris.

- OECD (2019). *The Missing Entrepreneurs 2019*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Ram, M., Jones, T., Edwards, P., Kiselinchev, A., Muchenje, L., & Woldesenbet, K. (2013). Engaging with super-diversity: New migrant businesses and the research–policy nexus. *International Small Business Journal*, 31(4), 337-356.
- Ramadani, V., Dana, L. P., Ratten, V., & Bexheti, A. (2018). *Informal Ethnic Entrepreneurship: Future Research Paradigms for Creating Innovative Business Activity*. Springer, Cham.
- 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.
- Ratinho, T., Amezcua, A., Honig, B., & Zeng, Z. (2020). Supporting entrepreneurs: A systematic review of literature and an agenda for research. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 154, 119956.
- Schittenhelm, K., & Schmidtke, O. (2011). Integrating Highly Skilled Migrants into the Economy: Transatlantic Perspectives. *International Journal*, 66(1), 127-143. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/002070201106600109>
- Schwartz, M. (2009). Beyond incubation: An analysis of firm survival and exit dynamics in the post-graduation period. *Journal of Technology Transfer*, 34, 403–421.
- Solano, G., Wolffhardt, A., & Xhani, A. (2019). Measures to support early-stage migrant entrepreneurs. Handbook. MEGA (Migrant Entrepreneurship Growth Agenda). Available at: <http://migrant-entrepreneurship.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/A.1.b-1.pdf> (accessed 26 September 2019)
- UN DESA (2020). Migration data portal. Data about mid-year 2020. Available at: [https://migrationdataportal.org/data?i=stock\\_abs\\_&t=2019&cm49=380](https://migrationdataportal.org/data?i=stock_abs_&t=2019&cm49=380), accessed 1 August 2021.
- 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/undesa\\_pd\\_2020\\_international\\_migration\\_highlights.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/undesa_pd_2020_international_migration_highlights.pdf), accessed 20 September 2021.
- Serpente, G., Martinelli, G., & Bolzani, D. (2024). Entrepreneurial support for migrant entrepreneurs: A systematization of a growing stream of literature. Accepted in B. Glinka and J. Freiling (Eds.), *Handbook of Migrant Entrepreneurship*, De Gruyter. In press.

- Waldinger, R., Aldrich, H. E., Ward, R. (1990). *Immigrant Entrepreneurs: Immigrant and Ethnic Business in Western Industrial Societies*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage
- Yu, S. (2020). How do accelerators impact the performance of high technology ventures? *Management Science*, 66(2), 530–552.
- Zhou, M. (2004). Revisiting Ethnic Entrepreneurship: Convergencies, Controversies, and Conceptual Advancements. *International Migration Review*, 38(3), 1040-1074.