



## EVENT SUMMARY

# Building an Alliance for Inclusive Entrepreneurship: Sharing local experiences, fostering European solutions

**Thursday 12 December 2024, 12.30-14.00 CET**

**Vanessa Cotterell**, Project Manager, UNITEE:

- Inclusive entrepreneurship connects us all here, it is the narrative through which we aim to connect different organisations and individuals working on this topic from the perspectives of different communities (incl. migrants, newcomers, diaspora groups, women, young people, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, etc.)
- While we didn't manage to create a new European Parliament Intergroup in 2024, we gained valuable contacts and support, making it a worthwhile effort.
- The next steps are to continue to grow the community and to plan joint actions in 2025 and beyond use the alliance to promote fundraising and project collaborations, research-based policy and advocacy, networking activities and communication campaigns and events.

**First Mentimeter poll (the larger the word, the more people submitted it):**

*“What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think about **cultural diversity and entrepreneurship?**” (60 submissions)*



## Perspectives from the community

**Manon Acke Moemb** presented [SheDidit](#), a Belgian organisation that connects diversity and female entrepreneurship: “The collective image of an entrepreneur is a white man, not a woman with diverse roots. We want to change the idea of what an entrepreneur looks like, we want to showcase role models of diverse female entrepreneurs.”

**Some of the key challenges for female entrepreneurs with diverse roots:** lack of networks, lack of role models and lack of knowledge.

**Approaches and solutions:** creating a talent pool of women with different roots and different skills, so that when companies or organisations are looking for diverse talent, they can find it. 4 flagship programmes: Youthpreneurs (group coaching for young girls to learn the basics of entrepreneurship); #SheMeansBusiness (one-on-one coaching with 5 sessions to learn the basics of business); the #SheHUB (a physical shop where women with diverse roots sell their products and they learn marketing skills); #SheFUND (a programme with interest free loan for diverse womenpreneurs)

**Michelle Amoakoh** presented [AiDiA](#), a company involving 30+ young professionals with different expertise and that organises an annual business pitch for Afro German entrepreneurs. The pitch event is one of the biggest of its kind for afro-german founders in Europe, a business and cultural event. **Key challenges for Afro-European founders:** Access to capital, knowledge and network

**Approaches and solutions:** support the founders in our ecosystem with investments and networks. Our main work is the event, the pitch, which is about education, financial support and an

opportunity to network, we also hand out cash and non-cash prizes. Aside from the pitch event, AiDiA has many other activities: including delegation trips, young entrepreneurs clubs and a podcast

**Iffat Rose Gill** presented [The Code to Change](#), a NL-based organisation that aims to tackle the skills gap in the ICT sector and address the digital gender divide and lack of diversity.

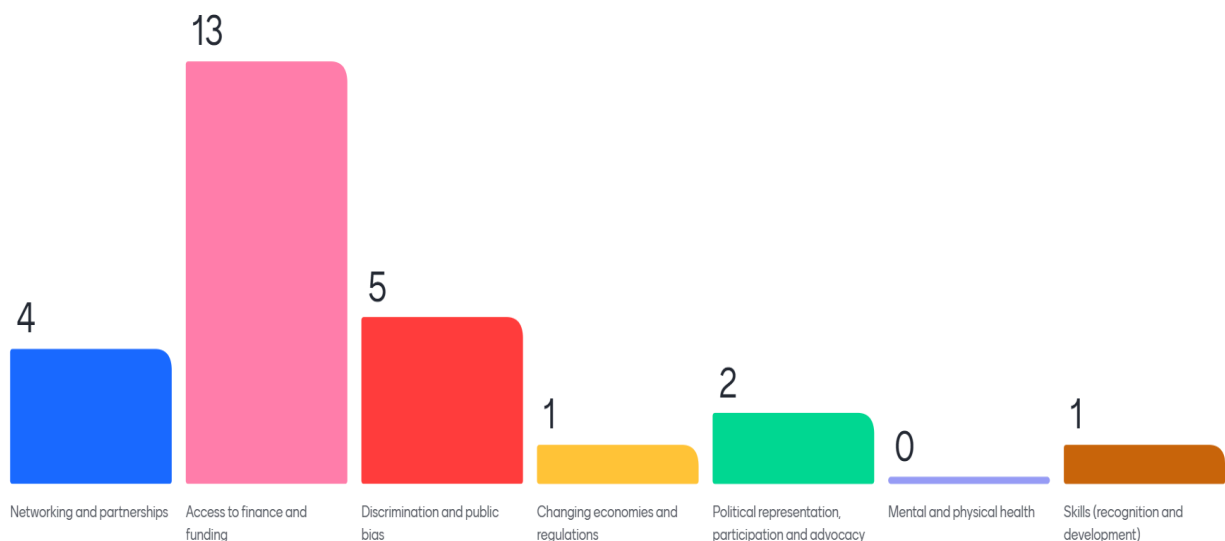
**Approach:** supporting marginalised women, providing them with tailored tech training and courses, professional mentorship, a community as well as opportunities to connect with leaders in the industry. The goal: support women to launch their careers or businesses and achieve their full potential.

**Key take-aways/learnings from their work:**

- The tech sector comes with particular challenges and forms of exclusion/discrimination towards women and people of colour; can be disencouraging for tech founders;
- A training programme without funding is not enough for founders, we cannot go from training to training.
- Entrepreneurship, as a person of colour, especially if you are a woman, you especially face a lack of funding. There are a few initiatives in the Netherlands and abroad that want to tackle this issue and raise awareness.
- Advise the local ecosystem to improve – no processes in place yet.
- Discrimination and under-representation of people of colour in incubator programmes;

**Second Mentimeter poll**

*From your perspective, what are the **biggest challenges** your entrepreneur communities face that require more support?*



**European trends and opportunities for inclusive entrepreneurship**

**Eva Kašperová** presented the work done at the [Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship \(CREME\)](#) at Aston University in Birmingham. CREME is a leading contributor to academic and policy debates on ethnic minority entrepreneurship, committed to producing and sharing knowledge useful for academic and practitioner communities.

**Example of research projects at CREME:** A recent research projects looked at evidence in the UK from the last 20 years and recommends that we invest in access to entrepreneurship for migrants, particularly access to finance: Migrants are more likely to want to start a business, but less likely to survive. Since the report was published 2 years ago, CREME has secured more funding for organisations working with migrant entrepreneurs.

Approach: evidence-based policy recommendations; collaborations across sectors; forming long-lasting relationships; highlighting the value diversity and inclusion for the economy; including those affected by policies in the making of policies; community organising for business support  
Two additional major projects: (1) empowering citizens to be more active in their local decision making - as many migrant entrepreneurs are excluded from local policy making, we wanted to increase leadership capacity; and (2) MILE, an AMIF-funded project that aimed to provide a platform for migrant communities to voice their concerns to local authorities.

“In the UK, the language around immigration is very negative, so we need to raise the voice of migrants. Migrants and minorities are more likely to be politically disengaged and migrant support providers don't see this as a priority.”

**Julien De Beys** from Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) at the European Commission presented the Commission's work and priorities for inclusive entrepreneurship. Although migrant entrepreneurship is not high on the EU Commission's agenda, it is not low either. The Commission future policies and funding for this topic rely on evidence provided by reports and projects, i.e. instance by the OECD (the [Missing Entrepreneurs](#) report).

Main approaches that will continue with the new Commission: taking into account the developments and needs on the ground in different under-represented communities, understanding what is missing in the ecosystems; pushing microfinance institutions to take more risks with their clients, both financially and in terms of mentoring and business advice and pushing for common standards e.g. Code of Conducts; promoting social entrepreneurship and the social economy; through the investEU programme to provide funding, the EU gives money to national authorities to spend on what we see as priorities; the Youth Entrepreneurship Policy Academy ([YEPA](#)), which is peer support, and inclusive entrepreneurship; disseminate the [Better Entrepreneurship Policy Tool](#); ESF+ programme.

**Key take-way:** the new mandate will provide more opportunities for inclusive entrepreneurship.

**Shawgi Ahmed** concludes on behalf of [PLACE Network](#), an organisation championing migrant-led innovation in all parts of society (incl. public leadership, business, media and arts), by providing transformative and innovative learning experiences to newcomers and host societies, while also giving newcomers space for self-determination and community

leadership, including through entrepreneurship. The Alliance is a work in progress and is open for others to join. This event can lead us to further discussions and topics in the future.

“We are shifting the perspective of migration from a burden to a unique asset for the development and growth of Europe.”

**Closing discussion + next steps:**

- Keep the momentum; we will organise more online and physical events; as well as support and collaborations for project funding; For collaboration – contact the UNITEE team ([media@unitee.eu](mailto:media@unitee.eu))
- Connecting communities, bridging silos;
- Key topic to consider for future discussions: sustainability and entrepreneurship; co-creation; showcasing value of diversity and entrepreneurship from the local-EU level
- The alliance highlights the value of collective intelligence and diverse perspective, from which policy makers and practitioners can benefit; We will continue growing the alliance;
- We will include the priorities identified today into our advocacy and action plan of actions for 2025.

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**Questions and comments from participants:**

Q: Does the SheDIDIT operate in rural areas of Belgium as well or only in Antwerp/urban areas?

A: We have offices in Antwerp, Vilvoorde, Ghent and Brussels. But our coaching can also be done online, or in a hybrid formula. So a short answer to your question: yes, we also target women living in more rural areas.

Q: How does SheDIDIT initially get in touch with your target group and more especially the young girls?

A: We have an in-house communication team that is recruiting via social media and apart from that we also built lots of partnerships (so our partners can refer to us as an NGO) and lastly, we also focus on collaborations with schools and post-school activity organisations.

Q: What are your challenges (at SheDIDIT and AiDiA) with the different administrative statuses with the people in asylum procedure, recognized refugees, those who came as students or family reunification, etc.?

A (from SheDIDIT): We coach anyone regardless if they have asylum or not. If they have questions about asylum, refugee status, etc. we refer them to a partner organisation such as <https://www.caw.be/locaties/adviescentrum-migratie-acm/>.

Lina Vosyliute: Also in response to great call from @Kristina Coric - The Migrant Accelerator (GER) if I am not mistaken, also on a funding part - DG JUST CERV is going to have a call on Citizen's

Participation, maybe there could be an interesting angle with UNITEE colleagues to look on 'new citizens' and the inclusive entrepreneurship'?

Hi, César from Youth Business Spain (YBS) here! Feel free to connect:

[www.linkedin.com/in/césarvaldelviralara](https://www.linkedin.com/in/césarvaldelviralara). I did not know about this project or initiative until weeks ago and I am happy to know more, in order to expand these inclusive ideas to the Spanish entrepreneurship ecosystem. Also open to opportunities for EU funding projects

Andreas Stefanidis: We can support the Alliance also with Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs program

Michelle Amoakoh: Question regarding fundings opportunities: How to create and make use of innovative financing mechanisms more inclusive entrep.

Kristina Coric: how to connect and expand together on EU level.

Lina Vosyliute: Corporate sustainability and how to make the link with this like SDGs.

Response by Eva -> indeed crucial. To my knowledge, still no link made in Business schools, for example.

Kristina Vayda: Silos and collaborations. Everyone has a specialty and needs to focus -> LACK of bridge in refugee entrepreneurship and mainstream world. How can we facilitate the link?

Refugee Entrepreneurship Network