

# TRANSNATIONAL BLUEPRINT

**BRIEFING PAPER:  
GROWING MIGRANT AND SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
AS A CHANNEL OF SOCIAL INNOVATION**

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**Interreg**  
CENTRAL EUROPE



**TASKFORCOME**

European Union  
European Regional  
Development Fund

# BACKGROUND

The two biggest societal challenges, which central Europe faces today are the integration of migrants into the labour market and social systems, and the systematic realisation of social innovation.

Transnational cooperation can support the development of ecosystems for inclusion and social innovation, where the key actors look for new ways of working together. It can result in additional services to citizens and the creation of new businesses.

From 2019, twelve partners from five countries have worked on solving these challenges through the Interreg Central funded project Task4Come. The project started by investigating the local community of migrant entrepreneurs before connecting with key local actors from the public, private and non-profit sector.

As the project partners developed relationships with the local actors, they were able to increase engagement with migrant entrepreneurs and start to develop a range of tools, services and resources for these migrant entrepreneurs to use. With these resources migrant entrepreneurs were able to explore local entrepreneurship opportunities as well as become part of the local business ecosystem. One stop shops were also set up across the partner countries which aimed to be the first of their kind, offering a unique service that any migrant entrepreneurs that needed help developing or opening their business could visit.

As the end of the project drew to a close, the partners saw the opportunity to turn all their learning into a blueprint that could be shared across Europe and implemented in other projects.

This blueprint provides an overview of what to implement, the timescale needed (based on 5 years) and various factors to put in when developing your own ecosystem for migrant entrepreneurs.

# PRIORITY AREAS

After extensive research with each partner, and a range of reflection sessions and the development of local action plans, there were clear themes that were addressed by each partner. Considering each partner had very unique migrant entrepreneurs ecosystems (for example Croatia having older and more experienced entrepreneurs compared to Germany), the partners felt that due to this crossover between all experiences, there could be four priority areas.

## 1. DEVELOPING A CLOSE COMMUNITY

By connecting with local champions of entrepreneurship, you can start building a strong community. This community already exists in most places in an informal manner, but to maximise its potential there is a need to engage, invest, promote and develop further.

All partners demonstrated a close community when they provided a range of formal and nonformal activities for them. This including things such as:

- general drop in sessions
- expert masterclasses in business topics
- networking brunches
- experience sharing conferences
- strategy sessions
- funding information
- social events

The best communities were responsive to the needs to the entrepreneurs and therefore catered for cultural and religious beliefs, took into consideration caring, education or existing work duties. Language was also a key barrier to overcome and therefore the partners ensured individuals available who spoke a number of languages and could explain various elements in ways appropriate to the migrants native tongue or homeland.

## 2. PROVIDING EXPERTS IN BUSINESS

Migrant entrepreneurs have a range of education and backgrounds, and therefore you need to be able to connect them with experts in business, law, accounting and tax. These people need to be well-versed in dealing with migrants, as they come with unique questions.

The partners that achieved the best results were those that worked with existing businesses who had a vested interest in helping out migrants. This could be because it was their livelihood, they had lived experience of it or they had previously been a migrant themselves.

The best experts were vetted already, and questioned on their knowledge by existing migrants in the country who had already been through the same situation. These experts were then called on time and time again, and it was clear to see by the migrants reactions to them that they enjoyed working with them as it was these individuals that brought the migrants back to the community space time and time again.

## 3. CONNECTING MIGRANTS WITH LOCALS

Knowing how to get things done locally, is best informed by locals that have been there and done it. Connecting migrants with locals working in the same field increases integration and facilitates growth and collaboration.

The best practise came out of places where integration with locals was done naturally and not forced. Where events were open for the general public but held in a way that facilitated migrants attendance. For example, this involved posting the events in various languages and hosting the events in various languages too. It involved having softer events that were more for networking than for learning.

Another key driver for success was directly connecting individuals (both migrants and locals) who are working in the same sector or who have come with similar ideas. The idea of competition was left behind and instead they worked together to strengthen the space to increase the market and in turn both benefit.

## 4. CREATING A COMMUNITY SPACE

Having a consistent time and place for migrants to access the service is vital. Turning it into a space where they can come and connect, means they are more likely to engage and get involved and thus connect with other parts of the service.

The best examples of community spaces were places that were easy to access and easily recognisable. They were promoted by many partners from all sectors, especially those engaged in the project. They provided fast internet, comfortable working spaces, and breakout areas for people to socialise.

The space also doubled up as the place where events, workshops and parties were held, so that it had its own reputation as a place to connect and socialise, as well as learn and grow their business. The individuals working from their full time were also warm and welcoming, flexible and caring, which in turn translated into more social interactions and more shared connections.

# FIVE YEAR ROADMAP

Based on the partners' experiences over the past 30 months, they were able to put together an action plan for each of their individual locations. These action plans also shared common themes as to what they would continue doing, and how they would develop, extend and improve in other areas.

This blueprint therefore split all these actions into five years, to provide those looking to set up similar migrant entrepreneurship ecosystems in their locality.

The key learning outcome here was that community and connectivity take years to build properly, and therefore it is one of the most important things to start as soon as possible.

All actions listed below are not intended to end, the year they are stated in are merely the year they are meant to be initiated, after which they are ongoing, and maybe evolve according to the local needs.

## YEAR 1 – PREPARE

Key actions for the first year are to:

1. Connect and engage with groups already working with migrants including associations, embassies and interest groups.
2. Seek referrals for professionals working with migrants in the areas of entrepreneurship, law, accounting and taxation.
3. Connect and engage with public bodies offering support in the field of entrepreneurship, law and taxation.
4. Source, develop and equip a local space that offers ample room for events, workshops, meetings and coworking.
5. Find local people with experience of working with migrants especially in softer activities such as socialising and trips.

During this first year, those in charge of developing the ecosystem must be extremely proactive and energetic in getting out into their locality to see what is already going on. Even if they feel they are already well connected there are normally a number of hidden pockets of migrant entrepreneurship that they should look to explore and bring them into the ecosystem. That's even without thinking about locations that are harder to reach, for example certain neighbours, remote villages and more rural destinations such as islands.

Once connected with these groups, the lead can then start to collect referrals from these existing migrant entrepreneurs to see who they enjoy working with and also who they don't like working with. Pretty soon, the lead will get an idea of the key players and the mavens in the community that will be vital for the ongoing success of the ecosystem. These people are the glue that keep the community together and that everyone within the community know of.

During this process it is recommended to start looking at where a lot of these migrants and migrant entrepreneurs hang out, and start working with a public sector partner to see if there are any local opportunities to either develop an existing community space or to create a whole new specifically for this demographic.

## YEAR 2 - IMPLEMENT

Key actions for the second year are to:

1. Launch space for migrant entrepreneurs, and implement a series of events, workshops and meetups.
2. Invite referred professionals to the space to hold various education.
3. Provide training to supporting organisations in how to work with migrants around cultural and linguistic differences
4. Create an online community and equip it with resources and contacts for migrant entrepreneurs, ensuring it is accessible culturally and linguistically.
5. Develop a marketing campaign to reach further migrant entrepreneurs who may not already be engaged with local organisations or may be in more remote locations.

Having now built some trust and a good reputation in the migrant entrepreneurship sector, as well as having developed local connections with all key players, it's now about moving to the next steps where you turn the talk into action.

The community space for migrant entrepreneurs to meet should be ready to go, and it should kick off with an event that will keep migrants coming back. The event needs to demonstrate value and connection to them, and the best way to do this is by bringing individuals and organisations there that already have a positive reputation within the community.

Further to this, an online community can be created as a more accessible and responsive place to exact needs. One vital tasks here is ensuring discussion happens between individuals on which platform you use is key to sustainability so it serves as a place to share and chat rather than just receive information.

Finally there is more outreach work to be done, working with existing organisations that work with migrants but on a lesser level, and sharing with them the project that is happening as well as looking at training and supporting them to offer them the chance to upskill when it comes to cultural knowledge.

## YEAR 3 – GROW

The key actions for the third year will see you:

1. Develop migrant champions that can then become the leaders in various sectors and be the ones to ensure they keep up to date with all relevant changes in entrepreneurship.
2. Formalise meetings, workshops and education, looking at accreditation where possible.
3. Run a series of sector specific events to connect locals and migrants further, involving migrants in the local ecosystem.
4. Create a catalogue of migrant run businesses to promote their businesses and input locally and in turn challenge possible perceptions, stereotypes and stigma.

With a community now in place, a variety of events happening regularly and the migrants having spent a year working alongside you, the next year brings the opportunity to grow and spread your work further.

Identifying the right migrants to take the ecosystem to the next step increases the potential to do this, because in various communities there will always be community leaders. Communities could be based on nationality, but also on age, gender, religion, interest among many other criteria. These communities will already have their formalised ways of meeting, and by engaging these leaders you can reach further into migrant communities.

In order to tackle misconceptions and sometimes stigma, it is also important to work with these leaders in developing a variety of ways to show what migrant entrepreneurs bring to the local community and how they are represented. This could be through fairs or events run by migrant entrepreneurs or through more digital media that remains online.

Support for migrant entrepreneurs will already exist on a small scale within the community, but the idea of this ecosystem is to expand it further so it becomes one with the local business ecosystem.

## YEAR 4 - REFLECT

In the fourth year of the project it will be time to:

1. Carry out a three year reflection with all stakeholders to define next steps and road to self sustainability.
2. Reflect on Theory of Change and measure outcomes to date, in order to provide background and experience for funding.
3. Hold higher level conversations with public bodies to look at scaling to a national level.
4. Create an event that can showcase migrant enterprises in the local community.
5. Formalise the network through the setting up of a legal entity which can then be used to apply for funding.
6. Set up a peer mentorship program using the first generation of migrants to mentor new mentors.

With two years of carrying out migrant entrepreneurs community activity, it is important to reflect on what you have reached so far in order to provide yourself a pathway for the upcoming years and go beyond this blueprint. Reflection should always take place with all stakeholders, both migrant and local to really identify what has changed and what still needs to be changed.

To reflect you can align it to your theory of change and initial local, national or EU goals, as well as the goals of local migrant organisations or societies.

There is also the important element of pushing the project from a local to a national level, because migrants live all over a country and quite often the cities provide a lot of services but the less populated areas provide little to nothing.

This links in with further promotion of migrant enterprises to demonstrate what is happening and inspire future generations. By now you would have seen a large number of migrant entrepreneurs visit your space, increasing year on year as you now have a good reputation as a place offering value and resources.

With a larger network it may be interesting to set up a legal entity to help represent the needs of the migrant entrepreneurs on a wider level, as well as open up opportunities to apply for funding to further develop the work that has been ongoing for four years.

This can be led by the leaders in the migrant ecosystem, and can see them take on a mentorship role to new participants using the service. This can help reduce cultural and language barriers as they will

be taking advice from someone who has not only been through the process of becoming an entrepreneur but also of moving to that specific country and everything they have had to do to succeed.

## YEAR 5 – SUSTAIN

The final year of the blueprint encourages you to:

1. Develop a model of sustainability and membership that can work on a national and then be developed into an international level.
2. Initiate migrant specific startup competitions and investment opportunities to add to the ecosystem.
3. Hold an international event showcasing new and established migrant entrepreneurs, to inspire and educate new cities on how to grow migrant entrepreneurship.
4. Work with EU level policy makers to ensure equality and openness to migrant entrepreneurs across the region.
5. Create a consultancy arm led by migrant entrepreneurs that can visit other places to help them review and then develop their ecosystems.

The local ecosystem is thriving and self sustaining by now, to the degree that you can look at hiring people within to run it. However this has to be covered somehow and you can look at various methods to support and continue the growth. This could also encourage you into looking at existing national and international platforms or programs that can help you achieve this goal.

With a critical mass of migrant entrepreneurs, there may also be the opportunity to develop specific funds or competitions for the demographic, in order to strengthen their ability to start and run businesses in the location. In terms of funds, this could help new migrant entrepreneurs who might not be eligible or capable of applying to local competitions due to language barriers.

There is also the option of looking at how you can maximise the knowledge gained through delivering this project to help develop a network across the EU when looking at migration and policy. This could even evolve into a service that the formalised body could undertake.

Working on a wider level, it is also important to look at replicating various activities you do locally, to an international level in partnership with other organisations who are working towards similar goals.