

MEnt

Migrant Entrepreneurs
team-up with mentors

[Short analysis of interviews]

[Deliverable: 1.3, WP 1]

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The role of interviews to migrant entrepreneurs within WP1 Preparation

This short report aims to summarise a number of interpretative results emerging from the interviews carried out in WP1, during the preparation phase for the design of the incubation cycles.

WP1, according to the MENT project proposal, was articulated in the following steps:

1. Review of **existing practices** (methods, targets, effectiveness ...) and of **relevant studies** in terms of migrant entrepreneurs and the activities of incubation and support.
2. Identification of **key cases of migrant entrepreneurs** and **interview** with entrepreneurs to understand obstacles and opportunities.
3. **Preparing the demand side**: understanding and connecting migrants (general and country specific) with national hubs, migrant associations, social cooperatives and other organisations connecting migrants to the working and social context. Reinforcing skills and awareness on cultural diversity (training module for migrants).
4. **Preparing the supply side**: accreditation and selection of mentors (general and country specific). Reinforcing skills and awareness on cultural diversity (training module for mentors) and meeting with migrant associations, social cooperatives and other organisations connecting migrants to the working and social context.
5. Detailed **design of the light incubation** programme.
6. Adaptation of **web platform** to be used during light incubation phases

Therefore, during this phase of the project, the interviews have been a significant part of the fieldwork.

The objectives of the interviews to migrant entrepreneurs were to understand:

- **Obstacles** to their becoming entrepreneurs in a different country
- **Opportunities** opening up in their narratives

The overall effort was aimed at contextualising the outputs within the different institutional, social and economic contexts, in order to **acquire useful and situated elements** for the careful design of the first cycle of incubation.

The interview template, as well as guidelines on how to select interviewees, has been developed jointly by Avanzi and Codici, while the output from each interview has been developed in two versions, responding to two different needs: an **detailed excel interview report** for analytical purposes, and a **shorter presentation**, aimed at dissemination and thus a wider audience.

The objective was to have at least 10 interviews in each country, but this has proven difficult for a number of reasons. Overall, more than 30 interviews have been done, involving migrant entrepreneurs with a wide variety of businesses, national origins, migrations paths and skills and competences.

A critical discussion of interview outputs

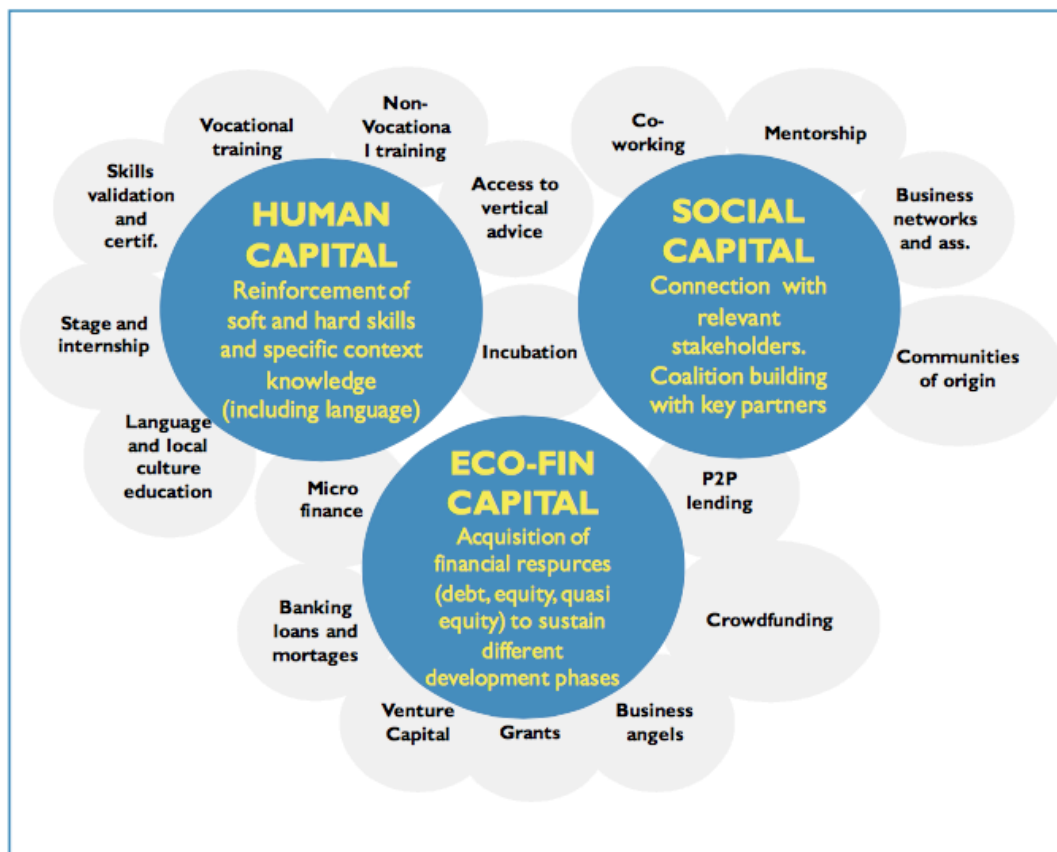
Looking at the entrepreneurs who have been interviewed in the different countries, **an extremely diverse set of interviewees** emerges, in terms of:

- Country of origin (mix of non-EU and formerly non-EU, now EU countries)
- Migration path (duration, number of countries visited, progression of legal status)
- Reasons behind the decision to become an entrepreneur
- Sectors/type of business (more or less connected to the life-course, interests of the individual, migration path)

It is possible to discern **more similarities in the type and structure of business**:

- A significant prevalence of individual entrepreneurs
- A prevalence of males over females
- A significant amount of small business
- The presence of some non-profit organisation

Looking more closely from the results, it is possible to use the interpretative key of **three capitals**, used for instance in the *SAME Project Report*, developed by Make a Cube and other partners in 2018 and aimed at the identification of important drivers for fostering migrant entrepreneurship in Europe (http://same-project.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/SAME_Report_online.pdf): **human capital** (education and skills); **social capital** (networks); **economic/financial capital**.



Same Project, 2018 (<http://same-project.com>)

The outputs from the interviews were useful to understand the **recurring elements in migrant entrepreneurship stories**, to reconstruct the different contexts in which such stories took place, and to derive possible directions for the **design of incubation cycles** within MENT; they have been divided here into three clusters, in line with the three capitals analysis: Skills and Competences, or Human Capital; Networking and support, or Social capital; economic dimension, or Economic-Financial capital.

1. Skills and Competences

In terms of education and skills, it is possible to read a rather clear division between:

- a number of migrant entrepreneurs with a **tertiary education background** (acquired partly in their country of origin and partly in another country, not always the country of final destination)
- other profiles, characterised by lower educational attainment levels.

In terms of language, **mastering the local language** is almost always mentioned as a significant obstacle, both in terms of the ability to perform daily routines and interacting with institutional actors, but also in terms of possibility to strengthen relational networks in the country of arrival and to better understand the features of local markets.

In terms of other skills, the difficulties and odds of the migration path itself are frequently mentioned as a way to acquire **new, soft skills**, or the better express the latent resources of individuals.

2. Networking and support

One of the most frequently mentioned major problems/obstacles during the migration path is the **loss of networks**.

For this reasons, migrant entrepreneurs frequently mention the importance of a **strong engagement in reconstructing and/or strengthening both personal and professional networks** (this is a very common advice to new entrepreneurs across the interviews).

To face such difficulties, the interviewees mentioned that they **received support from a variety of individual or professional actors**, both from the country or origin and not. On the other hand, there is a **significantly low recurrence of institutional/public administration support**, and also in the few cases in which it is mentioned, it appears to be too generic and standardised.

3. Economic Dimension

On this point, since the businesses analysed are very diverse, the interviews diverge significantly in terms of:

- Need of economic capital
- Ability to correctly assess this need
- Reliance of very close ties (within the nuclear or enlarged family)
- Reliance on networks of personal acquaintances
- Ability to detect funding possibilities in the new institutional context
- Ability to obtain funding from institutional agencies
- Possibility to self-finance the start-up

Useful elements for the incubation process

In line with the original objective of deriving knowledge on the main obstacles and opportunities faced by migrant entrepreneurs in order to strengthen the design of the incubation cycles in MENT, in the following the main elements useful to this purpose are summarised.

Skills and competences

There is a clear need to imagine some form of **language support**, particularly for newly or recently arrived migrants, able to specifically **strengthen language abilities in the sectorial areas of the envisaged business**.

At the same time, there is a need to specifically **tailor the different incubation and mentoring paths** to the individual needs of different profiles, because standardised support is not perceived as useful and relevant.

Network and support

The **involvement of parts of the migrant entrepreneur's own network** in the incubation and mentoring activities seems to be a promising path.

Moreover, there is a need to help **migrant entrepreneurs to form permanent networks** for the sharing of useful information, best practices, peer support etc.

Economic dimension

There is a need to more specifically target this issue in support and incubation initiatives, form some form of economic support to attend programmes, to a **support in building stricter connections to different possible funding sources** in the country of arrival, because there actors (banks, micro-finance, business angels, ...) are very difficult to identify and contact for migrant entrepreneurs.

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