

# Preface by the European Commission

At the end of 2023, the EU labour market has largely recovered from the COVID-19 crisis. However, access to self-employment remains challenging for underrepresented groups in entrepreneurship such as youth, people with disabilities and migrants. Furthermore, much progress can still be achieved as regards entrepreneurship for women, seniors, and unemployed people.

Compared to the strong motivation declared during their studies, the number of **young people** starting businesses remains low in the European Union. There is certainly an untapped potential here, and it is reassuring that nearly three-quarters of EU Member States have adopted strategies to promote youth entrepreneurship. The EU and the OECD have also set up the Youth Entrepreneurship Policy Academy ([www.yepa-hub.org](http://www.yepa-hub.org)).

Improving the social and labour market inclusion of **people with disabilities** is an important political objective. Entrepreneurship can be part of the suite of policy tools used to achieve it. However, few EU Member States have well-developed support systems for entrepreneurs with disabilities. We can do better.

The number of **migrants** in the EU will continue to increase in the coming years. We need to make a collective effort to ensure that they can all contribute to society and that no one is left behind. Given the demographic outlook and the skills shortages the EU is already facing, the integration of migrants in our labour markets is not about fairness only: it has become an economic necessity for our societies.

Three quarters of the “missing” entrepreneurs in the EU are **women**. Despite the many actions taken in their favour an important gender gap persists. The European Commission strongly encourages Member States to look at work-life balance issues and access to childcare in particular, and to fully implement the EU Council Recommendation on access to social protection for all.

Entrepreneurship policy can play a role in supporting active ageing policy. There is a growing population of healthy **seniors** with the skills, financial resources, and time available to contribute to economic activity through entrepreneurship. Business set up by seniors may be good valorisation of the precious experience older people have built throughout their carrier.

The present Report dedicates a specific chapter to welfare bridges, allowing **unemployed people** to engage in entrepreneurship. Although many countries are still lacking experience, the findings are encouraging, showing that welfare bridges programmes, coupled with training or business support, are really beneficial for individuals and for society at large.

Entrepreneurship is not a solution for all employment issues, but it is a piece of the puzzle. In a distinct but related domain, the European Commission is also pushing for further development of the social economy, that also offers solutions for our target groups such as migrants or people with disabilities. Recently, EU Member States have agreed on a Council Recommendation on developing social economy framework conditions. It is an important step ahead.

Let me finally express my gratitude to the OECD for our fruitful cooperation that has led to this brand new 2023 edition of the Missing Entrepreneurs Report!



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