

# MEGE—An Educational Partnership Supporting Migrant Entrepreneurship

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## Abstract

This article describes the implementation and lessons learned from MEGE—Multicultural Encounters, Growth and Entrepreneurship, an educational project aimed at better utilizing the expertise of migrant communities and international professionals in Finland, to foster entrepreneurship among those who migrate or return to the country from abroad. The 3-year project helped build bridges between communities by connecting different educational institutions and bringing together migrant communities and actors in the local entrepreneurship ecosystem. The resulting entrepreneurship training package was developed in cooperation with migrant participants and was offered free of cost to all international professionals, regardless of employment/residence status or cultural background. Key lessons learned suggest that the impact of such programs should be understood broadly, and that best results can be achieved by considering entrepreneurship education as both a service and a community. Such programs should contribute to participants' business acumen and bring together migrants and members of local entrepreneurship ecosystems.

*Keywords: entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education, migrants*



**E**ntrepreneurial activity by migrants—people who live in a country where they were not born—carries great social and economic potential (DG GROWTH & VVA Consulting, 2016; OECD, 2019; Rath & Swagerman, 2011). For migrants, entrepreneurship can offer a way out of unemployment, increase economic and social status, and support greater integration into their host country (Fong et al., 2007; Kloosterman, 2003). For host countries, migrant entrepreneurs represent an important group that can operate in market niches, utilize experience and knowledge from their native countries and networks, and thus combat challenges of the labor market and contribute to job creation and economic growth (Sahin et al., 2014).

Although entrepreneurship is always a risky and demanding endeavor, it becomes even more challenging for migrants, in particular

for refugees (Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008). Challenges arise from individual limitations, the social position and cultural traditions of an ethnic group, local market conditions, and the institutional support available in a host country (Chliova et al., 2018). Practical support for migrant entrepreneurship, such as providing training and coaching to help develop entrepreneurial skills or gain access to funding and networks, is partly in the hands of the private or third sector. At the same time, national-level policymakers and the European Union typically provide financing for these programs (DG GROWTH & VVA Consulting, 2016).

In this article, we describe the implementation and lessons learned from a project—MEGE—Multicultural Encounters, Growth and Entrepreneurship—that aimed to create a new type of support service for migrant entrepreneurs in a national environment (Finland), as well as to develop the basis

for further collaboration between education providers. The project's main objective was to help migrants establish growth companies and better integrate themselves with local entrepreneurial ecosystems. Our findings present participants' experiences and illuminate lessons for us in terms of developing the provision of education and the assessment of the outcomes of entrepreneurship education programs.

### Context of the Project

The MEGE project was established to better utilize the expertise of international experts who had moved or returned to Finland. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment in Finland emphasizes the great benefits to be gained from integrating migrants into the Finnish entrepreneurship and labor markets and from utilizing the novel thinking and connections they proffer. Migrants can advance the internationalization and growth of companies and can continue the operations of viable businesses whose owners seek to retire or otherwise leave the business. Nevertheless, Finland lags behind in taking advantage of migrant entrepreneurs' capacities. Recent statistics indicate that no significant difference exists between the self-employment rate of natives and that of immigrants in Finland (Fornaro, 2018). However, these two groups differ drastically in terms of entrepreneurial income. Furthermore, unemployment rates among various groups of immigrants differ considerably, suggesting that—despite the entrepreneurship support services that many organizations offer in the country—certain migrant groups may experience difficulties in finding the right type of advice to start a business, leading to migrant entrepreneurs' lacking know-how to grow their businesses successfully. There is a pressing need to enhance cooperation between education providers and to offer opportunities for migrant entrepreneurs to connect with other entrepreneurs in order to gain both peer support and specific knowledge about entrepreneurship in different industries.

The implementation of MEGE involved policymakers and funders, education providers, and participants from the migrant community.

### Policymakers and Funders

The activities of MEGE were funded by

Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council, which drew from European Regional Development Funds. It supported the targets of both the Talent Boost program and Sustainable Growth and Jobs 2014–2020 (Finland's structural funds program).

### Educational Consortium

The project was carried out by a consortium of several educational institutions that operate in the capital region of the country but had never previously worked together. Its partners were Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Helsinki Business College, The Shortcut, and Aalto University. These project partners established a new operational model that pulled together core expertise, distinct service offerings, and resources. In addition, the project involved seasoned entrepreneurs, investors, and business coaches, utilizing these actors' feedback on assessing best practices and lessons learned.

### Migrant Participants

The educational services were offered, without any cost, to all international professionals, regardless of employment/residence status or cultural background. By September 2020, a total of 800 individuals with an interest in entrepreneurship had participated in MEGE training programs and events, and thousands of people had gained access to information on the free-of-charge training offered by MEGE through its website and newsletters. Although a number of events remained intimate and consisted of only a handful of participants, the largest event, Startup Circus, which was organized in December 2019, gathered close to 500 people. The project participants represented a plethora of cultural backgrounds and entrepreneurial experience. For instance, a Design Prototyping Weekend with 48 participants involved representatives from 29 nationalities.

### Theoretical Framing

The insights offered in this article relate to several important streams of research, which are summarized in Figure 1.

First, research on migrant/ethnic entrepreneurship has explored the particularities of business activities carried out by those from specific sociocultural and ethnic backgrounds (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Dabić

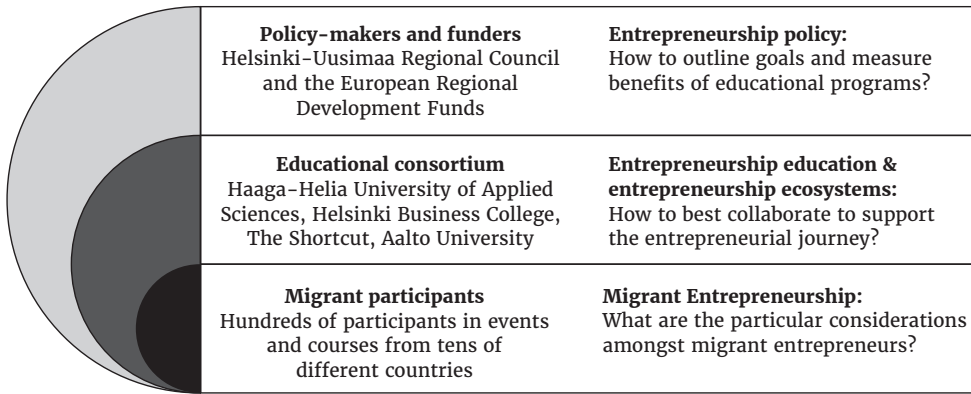


Figure 1. MEGE Project and Central Research Questions

et al., 2020; Ma et al., 2013; Naudé et al., 2017; Ram et al., 2017). Here, the aim has been to better understand the types of businesses and market spheres (e.g., the ethnic enclaves) where migrants carry out entrepreneurship, and to investigate the particular strategies they have applied in terms of, for instance, employment, sourcing, and marketing. The number and heterogeneity of MEGE participants is vital in order to generate valuable insights on migrant entrepreneurship.

Second, the case presented in this article illuminates best practices among education providers and provides insights into the literature on entrepreneurship education, and in particular into migrant entrepreneurship education (Hägg & Gabrielsson, 2020; Nabi et al., 2017; Pittaway & Cope, 2007) and research on entrepreneurship ecosystems (Cavallo et al., 2019; Maroufkhani & Wagner, 2018; Spigel, 2017). Prior research on entrepreneurship education focuses on the means of transferring knowledge on how—and by whom—entrepreneurial opportunities are discovered, evaluated, and exploited, thereby developing the most appropriate pedagogical approaches and exploring ways to measure the impact and outcomes of such educational efforts. The ecosystem approach adds to this by advancing our understanding of how entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial activity are interlinked in different countries and institutional environments.

Third, enhancing our knowledge on migrant entrepreneurship is crucial for research on entrepreneurship policy (Arenal et al., 2019; Duruflé et al., 2018; O'Connor, 2013), as well as for policymakers who wish to capitalize on its economic benefits in addition to ensuring the inclusiveness and fairness

of economic systems and entrepreneurial freedom.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The MEGE partners collected data on the project extensively throughout its duration. Data collection methods included a series of surveys sent to all participants at different stages of the project; in-depth interviews with around 30 participants at the outset, in the middle, and at the end of the project; and observation of and feedback on each training session or event. These data generated an understanding of the profile of MEGE participants, their needs and challenges, as well as the progress of their entrepreneurial journeys. In addition to participant/customer experiences, project partners monitored the development of key performance indicators (e.g., visits to the project website, training participants, number of established businesses) and benchmarked their offering with other, similar education providers.

The gathered data were analyzed jointly in workshops in order to assess the quality of services, evaluate risk and project management, and measure the project's impact. Besides ensuring the successful execution of the project itself, the data analysis was conducted to evaluate the future potential and scalability of the project's service offering, as well as to share best practices with those working with or studying migrant entrepreneurship and its concomitant supportive education and ecosystems.

### Project Description

We next describe the goals and implementation of the MEGE project, both of which

are relevant for developing entrepreneurship policy and educational collaboration. We then explore insights gained from discussions and interviews with migrants who participated in the program. These individual experiences serve as the key with which to unlock conclusions on best practices in terms of successful entrepreneurship education.

### Goals and Measurement

The project's primary goal was to tackle the challenges faced by migrants trying to establish and acquire businesses. In addition, the project worked to help migrants find employment in start-up companies and other entrepreneurial businesses. By doing so, the project aimed to increase the number of new businesses, successful business successions, and employment rates. Concomitantly, particular attention was paid to enhancing the social and environmental sustainability of the local businesses and ensuring equality among people from different genders and varying cultural backgrounds. In line with these goals, the key performance indicators tracked by the project included several quantitative indicators.

In addition to numerical goals, the MEGE project was designed to generate new ways of operating. Importantly, it was tasked with contributing to skills development by designing a new training package with and for migrants wishing to become entrepreneurs. This included creating a new operational model that could enhance the availability and versatility of educational services offered in the field of migrant entrepreneurship. The benchmark study as a part of the MEGE project suggested that the numerous providers of similar services were not necessarily aware of their peers' precise offerings, or that they did not share their knowledge; hence, it was important to design a form of collaboration that could draw together the core competencies of various education providers.

Furthermore, the project was a means for ensuring future growth by raising awareness of migrant entrepreneurship and the educational services available. Studies show that migrants often do not know about support programs on offer in their new country of residence (Rath & Swagerman, 2011). To mitigate this challenge, the MEGE project clearly emphasized success stories in its communication, thereby boosting the en-

thusiasm and confidence of migrants interested in entrepreneurship. This approach was believed to generate more significant and long-term outcomes that went far beyond the project's duration. The project's results are summarized in Table 1.

### Educational Collaboration and Offering

Together with the target group, the project partners created a new training package to support international professionals on their entrepreneurial path and connect them with local entrepreneurial ecosystems. Several design workshops were used alongside the continuous monitoring of needs to create adjustable and comprehensive services in four areas: (1) personal development, (2) new business creation, (3) business acquisitions, and (4) networking. The different modules applied varying methods, including online learning platforms and self-reflection, quick group work and iterations, one-on-one coaching and mentoring, and large events and gatherings.

#### *Personal Development*

The offering for personal development focused on identifying each individual's capabilities, motivations, and entrepreneurial skills. This included a multimodule course titled "Find Your Strengths," which consisted of coaching sessions and spanned several weeks, and the course "Developing an Entrepreneurial Mindset," which was meant to enhance the knowledge and skills necessary in entrepreneurship via an online teaching environment. Furthermore, one-on-one mentoring by experienced entrepreneurs was offered to individuals who were in the process of starting up their business. This enabled the identification of individuals' specific strengths and challenges in terms of their personal growth and business development, as well as the creation of a comprehensive plan for the most critical steps and help needed along the way.

#### *Start a New Business*

An important element of the services on offer was training that supported the formulation and validation of business ideas, as well as the concrete launch of business operations. Training modules were designed to support different types of entrepreneurship, ranging from self-employment to high-growth business ventures, and to offer more theoretical tools for thinking as well

**Table 1. Summary of MEGE Results**

<b>New businesses</b>	
SMEs utilizing the expertise of international professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20+ new SMEs established during the project</li> <li>• Approx. 50% of new SMEs owned by women and 50% by men</li> <li>• Approx. 50% of new SMEs have a low-carbon impact</li> <li>• 10+ SMEs increased their revenue or personnel, created a new product, or expanded their market during the project</li> </ul>
<b>Skills development</b>	
Training offered free of charge to all international professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MEGE activities covering 4 modules: personal development, start a new business, acquire a business, networking</li> <li>• 1,045 participants attended the training and events during the project</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge sharing</b>	
Practical information for future international entrepreneurs and sharing insights with educational providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A comprehensive service catalogue and a podcast on how to start a business in Finland (e.g., registration, grants, funding, accelerators &amp; incubators, acquisitions, communities, and conferences)</li> <li>• Videos telling the stories of MEGE entrepreneurs</li> <li>• Description of all MEGE services and best practices enabling future implementation of similar training</li> <li>• Six publications targeted at educational institutions (e.g., on mentoring, community development, measuring)</li> </ul>

*Note.* SME = small and medium-sized enterprises.

as practical support to help the participants advance to the stage of registering their businesses and acquiring their first customers. Training events included the quick introduction course “How to Start a Business in Finland” and an “Idea-to-Prototype” course where students “competed” in the task of clarifying a business idea. Intensive digital prototyping courses carried out over a few days guided participants toward methods of agile iteration through which business ideas could be turned into prototypes and presented to an expert audience to generate feedback and development ideas. As in the case of personal development, one-on-one mentoring was used to offer guidance on starting up a business.

risky path to entrepreneurship than starting up a new business. Nevertheless, every year thousands of entrepreneurs are daunted by finding a successor for their businesses. With this in mind, MEGE offered a training track dedicated to knowledge and skills needed for successful business acquisitions and to connect entrepreneurially minded migrants with owners of established businesses. The project’s educational offerings included the courses “Legal Aspects in Business Acquisitions,” “Financing Aspects in Business Acquisitions,” “Valuation in Business Acquisitions,” and “Business Planning in Business Acquisitions” to smooth the path to entrepreneurship through acquisition.

#### **Acquire a Business**

Buying an existing business is often a less

#### **Networking**

Finding additional help and resources from

the broader entrepreneurial community and support service network played a central role in supporting each of the areas outlined above. MEGE offered several events that enabled migrants to connect with the local entrepreneurial ecosystem. As examples of these events, the project organized a Grand Opening that gathered around 100 participants interested in entrepreneurship, and an annual Startup Circus that connected over 500 people, including established entrepreneurs, investors, and new or potential migrant entrepreneurs and artists, to create an atmosphere of enthusiasm and creativity. Those interested in business acquisitions were offered a specific event that supported matchmaking and helped migrants locate a suitable target company. In addition to events that were recurrently organized over the project's duration, all MEGE participants were invited to work in a coworking space, thereby alleviating the costs of renting a business location and enabling them to connect with fellow entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs-to-be.

### Participants' Experiences

In-depth data collection throughout the project duration allowed us to gain an understanding of migrant participants' backgrounds, their varying goals, and their key needs for assistance on their entrepreneurial journeys.

### *Heterogeneity of Participant Profiles*

Typically, migrants who participate in entrepreneurship training are adults who have chosen to move to a new country. Often, they have studied, worked, and even run businesses in their countries of origin, and they have already immersed themselves in the host country's educational programs and labor markets. It follows that they have both professional and personal life experience that can be critically useful for their entrepreneurial careers and should be taken into consideration. Contrary to common stereotypes of entrepreneurs being young men, the data collected from the MEGE participants demonstrated that migrants interested in entrepreneurship form a diverse body not limited to one age group or gender. Their relatively high level of education may have reflected the program's being offered in English.

There was also great variety in MEGE participants' backgrounds and life situations, which affected their qualifications, assets,

and capabilities for establishing businesses. Length of stay in Finland, as well as original reasons for migration, were found to be crucial factors influencing individuals' readiness for entrepreneurship. For instance, those moving to study and work in Finland due to prior connections with the country (e.g., a spouse, employer, ethnic networks) typically had time to plan and organize their departure, save money, and prepare for the cultural changes that awaited them. They were also more likely to be assisted by preexisting social networks. In contrast, others may have migrated out of necessity following persecution or traumatic experiences (Wauters & Lambrecht, 2006) resulting in a lower degree of embeddedness in the host country and leaving them in a more unstable and vulnerable position. Some had recently arrived, and others had spent decades living in Finland. In addition to relations with their host country, family conditions and cultural background influenced the support migrants received from their social environment.

MEGE participants arrived from a variety of countries (e.g., Ghana, Mexico, Chile, Pakistan) that have either a stronger or weaker culture of entrepreneurship, as well as exhibiting distinct, gender-based cultural norms (Kloosterman, 2010; Kloosterman et al., 2016). As a consequence, some reported their families to be highly supportive of their entrepreneurial plans, yet the majority claimed to be working (in paid employment) in order to take care of family obligations and hence had little time or external support for engaging in entrepreneurship.

### *Motivation for Creating Social and Economic Value*

Research shows that migrants' motivation for entrepreneurship can stem from necessity or dissatisfaction, and it can be geared to reaching out for opportunities and achieving one's goals. Reasons include the expectation of gaining independence and flexibility, acquiring a higher income, utilizing one's work experience and leadership qualities, continuing family traditions, dissatisfaction with a current job, or wishing to live a life that is consistent with one's ideology and values (Dana, 1997; Gomez et al., 2020). Strikingly, MEGE participants' motivations were not typically related to belief in the necessity for entrepreneurship, yet migrants participating in the program often saw entrepreneurship as an

appealing professional choice. Many said they wanted to “use their full potential” and “create social impact.” Business ideas here reflected the internal motivations of MEGE participants, a number of which were closely linked to migrants’ prior work experience and the markets that they already knew. Nevertheless, many of the migrants had ambitious goals of building businesses that they found meaningful and important.

Our data revealed that participants commonly did not wish to learn solely about the initial steps of validating business ideas and establishing companies, expressing instead a strong need for acquiring knowledge on ensuring the profitability of their business, enhancing customer understanding and skills for managing customer relations, and establishing functioning sourcing networks. This finding resonates with research suggesting that the most beneficial topics in migrant entrepreneurship include financial planning, networking and building strong relationships, and understanding a given market.

#### ***Need for Networks and Integration***

MEGE participants recognized the need not only to acquire business acumen but to gain peer support and build networks with relevant business partners and more experienced entrepreneurs. This finding is in line with prior research that has accentuated the significance of networks. It is crucial for migrants to build a supportive community with cultural and/or religious coethnic peers from similar geographical backgrounds. Primarily this enables them to learn about cultural differences and specific parameters of running a business in the host country from people with similar sociocultural backgrounds (Chliova et al., 2018); engaging with entrepreneurial role models can further boost confidence.

In addition, it is beneficial for migrants to break out of “ethnic enclaves” that lock them into niche markets (Achidi Ndofor & Priem, 2011). Integration into a region’s or country’s broader entrepreneurship ecosystem offers far greater access to financial and nonfinancial forms of support. Creating networks within local society enables migrants to provide services and products to a mainstream market and to access a larger pool of qualified employees (Arrighetti et al., 2014). Networking and integrating offer the potential for higher earnings and are a precondition for migrant entrepreneurship

being able to serve the individual, the community, and national well-being.

### **Key Lessons Learned**

In this section, we summarize key learning outcomes from the project with an eye to offering concrete best practices for higher education providers who reach out to migrant communities, and to informing policymakers on the potential outcomes and appropriate means of assessing the impact of such entrepreneurship education programs. Key insights are presented in Figure 2.

#### **Embrace Individual Capabilities**

Our analysis of participant profiles brings to light important factors for consideration by higher education providers working on migrant entrepreneurship support. Although university students and others participating in higher education manifest individual differences, this group tends to be more homogeneous than migrants. It follows that educational institutions wishing to accommodate migrants must adjust training programs to serve a broader range of needs. Importantly, educational services and support should build on the experience and skills of migrants, which in some cases can be extremely high (Obschonka et al., 2018). At the same time, education providers are required to acknowledge migrants’ individual life situations, for migrants may be hindered from starting up businesses by many factors that fall outside the scope of entrepreneurship education (Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008). It is vital to show empathy and strive to guide migrants toward the most appropriate sources of support.

#### **Create Resilience and Sustainability**

Based on observed experiences of MEGE participants’ motivations, we conclude that it is necessary for higher education providers to offer the knowledge and tools that help migrants to run their businesses independently and in the long run. The theoretical frameworks and information offered in the training programs, events, and mentoring sessions should be designed so that they can be utilized by migrants in the various situations they face as entrepreneurs. In addition, when supporting them in the development of their entrepreneurial skills, education should consider the specific requirements of business ideas, as well as

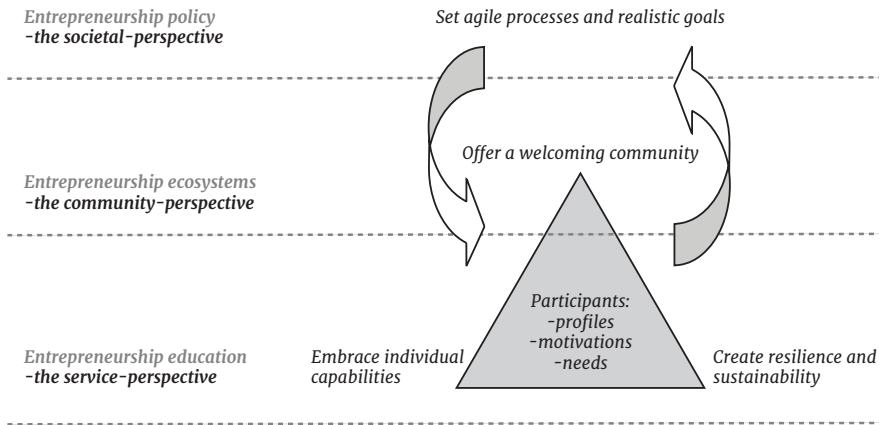


Figure 2. Three Perspectives for Successful Migrant Entrepreneurship Education

cognitive factors and the personality of each individual.

Concretely, the question at hand deals with helping participants to develop a proactive and entrepreneurial mindset that enables them to cope with challenging situations and take advantage of opportunities that may arise (Engel et al., 2019). This type of “mental capital” can be even more vital for entrepreneurial outcomes than training that merely focuses on learning business skills (Bécharde & Grégoire, 2005).

It remains for us to emphasize that it is also a question of ethics for education providers not to focus on business creation but—to the best of their ability—to seek to ensure that migrants who take an entrepreneurial risk actually become successful and able to sustain their businesses.

### Offer a Welcoming Community

Following our finding that migrants highlight the need for intangible social support, we conclude that education providers that offer migrant entrepreneurship support should regard themselves both as a service offering migrants tools to navigate the entrepreneurial path, and as a community enabling fresh entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs-to-be to connect with their relevant peers and partners (Spigel, 2017).

In order to offer a welcoming community, MEGE organized several events that focused neither on training nor on reaching particular educational goals, but instead allowed people to meet each other in more informal settings. These events—such as the Grand Opening and Startup Circus—were

considered highly successful in terms of connecting the local entrepreneurial ecosystem and (future) migrant entrepreneurs. In addition, the project offered a coworking space for participants to network and develop their ideas together. To celebrate the entrepreneurial migrant community, success stories of MEGE participants were shared frequently via newsletters and social media. Finally, the one-on-one mentoring meetings were also used to remind migrants that they were surrounded by helpful and experienced entrepreneurs.

### Be Agile and Realistic

The experiences and examples drawn from the MEGE project lead us to emphasize the importance of measuring the quality and impact of such educational programs in a wide range of ways so as to gain a more comprehensive picture. Ultimately, it is crucial for education providers to see individual projects as a stepping stone to further collaboration and the advancement of the educational field. In the case of the MEGE project, the consortium partners developed a road map for the future that laid out how services would be continued by the individual partners involved and the areas in which partners identified the most synergies for further collaborative projects.

In terms of the outcomes of any single project, policymakers, migrants themselves, and education providers are advised to have realistic goals in terms of the amount and speed of new business creation that can result from entrepreneurship training (Kamovich & Foss, 2017). Entrepreneurship is a challenging endeavor, and the path from the identification of opportunities to



the establishment of a business often can take years. Business acquisitions, which require great motivation, compromise, and readiness from both buyers and sellers, can be even slower processes.

In many countries, migrants have been found to be highly entrepreneurial individuals (Vandor & Franke, 2016). However, they are faced with numerous personal, cultural, and institutional barriers and therefore can face more challenges than the local population to starting their own businesses. For instance, university students commit themselves to educational programs for a specific period of time with the aim of obtaining a diploma, but migrants participate in entrepreneurial education programs only when they are able to and when they feel that a program advances their concrete business goals.

### Future Directions

The lessons learned and best practices identified in the collaborative project MEGE—Multicultural Encounters, Growth and Entrepreneurship lead us to conclude this contribution with general implications for entrepreneurship policy, the research and practice of migrant entrepreneurship education, and the development of the entrepreneurial ecosystems within which entrepreneurial actors cooperate.

### Entrepreneurship Policy

The increasing number of migrants in many countries and the economic outcomes generated by their businesses have enhanced political interest in this phenomenon. Entrepreneurship policy understands that past engagement in entrepreneurship and cross-cultural experiences result in high entrepreneurial drive among migrants that can be harnessed once (some of the) barriers are removed.

The experiences of the MEGE project support belief in the potential of migrant entrepreneurship by bringing to light migrants' unique skills and ambitions. Nevertheless, we also emphasize the necessity of adopting an ethical and cautious approach when promoting migrant entrepreneurship (Naudé et al., 2017). Empathy toward the life situations of migrants goes hand-in-hand with understanding that their capability to start businesses depends on their individual situations, their social networks, and the overall

market environment. For instance, sudden economic shifts may dramatically influence entrepreneurs, as became evident in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic spread across the globe. We suggest that the field of migrant entrepreneurship policy calls for further research on the long-term benefits of entrepreneurship for migrants themselves. The MEGE project has played a role in accomplishing precisely this objective.

### Entrepreneurship Ecosystems

For the development of entrepreneurship ecosystems—where higher education operators collaborate with entrepreneurs and other actors—the experience gained from the MEGE project demonstrates the benefits of pulling together the resources and know-how of different providers (Duruflé et al., 2018). Such collaboration enables service providers to communicate their offerings better and reach those migrant populations interested in entrepreneurship; it also enhances agility in adapting to target groups' needs. In this way different educational partners can utilize their respective strengths and learn from each other.

Challenges remain in regard to enhancing connections between entrepreneurship education providers and enabling specialization to help guide migrants to the most suitable services (e.g., financing, prototyping, networking). Furthermore, building bridges between the entrepreneurship community and other support services targeted at migrants would be valuable, as many barriers to entrepreneurship arise in domains that lie beyond the core expertise of entrepreneurship educators.

### Entrepreneurship Education

In terms of the research and practice of entrepreneurship education, the crucial message of the MEGE project is that entrepreneurship education among migrants is a challenging topic for two reasons: The target group is highly heterogeneous in terms of capacities, and the various constellations of business ideas and industries are all imbued with their own particularities. We offer a number of insights into the basic pillars of entrepreneurship education (Fayolle & Gailly, 2008): what, how, for whom, and why. The best practices identified in the MEGE project highlight that, in terms of the contents (the what) of entrepreneurship education, it is important to provide migrants with support that serves

their concrete goals and enables them to run businesses successfully.

Furthermore, we draw attention to the notion of understanding migrant entrepreneurship education not only as a service but also as a community that provides access to peer and professional support. In terms of methods and pedagogy (the how), the MEGE project's best practices underscore the need for tailoring the training programs to differing needs and life situations, so that those learning through interaction, as well as those who can invest only minimal time alongside regular jobs and family affairs, can take advantage of the training on offer.

As discussed above, we urge education providers to acknowledge the heterogeneity of their target group (the for whom) and embrace their clients' professional and life experiences; and to set realistic targets (the why) for their educational projects and programs, as well as utilizing a broad spectrum of measures to evaluate potential impact and benefits. Taking into consideration the need to support the resilience and sustainability of businesses, we urge further research and experimentation in methods that provide the necessary support in an easily accessible form, and we encourage migrants to be independent and take the initiative in their own interest. Furthermore, as migrants are often highly skilled—and often wish to be part of a community in their host country—education providers would be well advised to consider how to take advantage of migrants' capacities and abilities in the context of entrepreneurship education.

## Conclusions

This article described the implementation and lessons learned from a project—MEGE—Multicultural Encounters, Growth and Entrepreneurship—that aimed at creating a new type of support service for migrant entrepreneurs in Finland, as well as seeking to create the basis for further collaboration between education providers. The article offered practical insights on migrant entrepreneurship generated by migrants participating in the program, as well as by the education providers included in the project consortium, and thus illuminated central questions in the fields of entrepreneurship policy, entrepreneurship education, and entrepreneurship ecosystems. Key lessons learned suggest that the impact of such programs should be understood in broad terms, and that best results can be reached by offering services that strengthen participants' business acumen and create a sense of community.

The 3-year project advanced community engagement by connecting different educational operators and bringing together local entrepreneurship ecosystems and migrant communities. The project group designed a novel training package for, and with, migrants, raised awareness of migrant entrepreneurship, and created a new operational model that draws on the strengths of each educational institution. The consortium partners also developed a road map for the future that explicated how these services were to be continued by the individual partners, as well as the areas in which partners saw the greatest potential for synergies in further collaborative projects.



## Note

The project discussed in this article (MEGE—Multicultural Encounters, Growth and Entrepreneurship, <https://www.mege.fi>) was funded by Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council by drawing from European Regional Development Funds.

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