



European Recommendations



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**SOCIAL INCLUSION OF ADULTS THROUGH
ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

SUMMARY

This European policy brief focuses on the insights gained from the expert presentations during our five conferences throughout our EU Erasmus+ KA3 project, SIATE (Social Inclusion of Adults Through Entrepreneurship - <https://www.siate.eu/>). It is intended to provide policymakers with the current results on how low- skilled adults in vulnerable positions are socially included through entrepreneurship.

The policy messages refer to the seven most important results:

The alignment of EE policies with the dominant, European-wide ‘utilitarian’ discourse of promoting “employability”, even if investing in formal qualification and entrepreneurship education do not necessarily lead to promoting equity, empowering individuals, or addressing poverty, involuntary migration and social exclusion.

The need for improving coordination, data collection and monitoring at different levels. Entrepreneurship Education (EE) policies often operate at a national level, posing challenges in addressing regional/local nuances.

The need for improving the articulation between the educational, social system and the labour market given that there is a lack of qualified personnel in all partner countries and also a mismatch between skills supply and demand on the labour market.

The need to increase investment in diverse adult education, considering pre-migration skills and diverse backgrounds. As a result, customised entrepreneurship education (EE) programs and policies are essential. Specific support is needed for those arriving in Europe as involuntary migrants, refugees or asylum seekers.

The involvement in entrepreneurship/entrepreneurship education of low-skilled marginalised groups is also highly dependent on the nature of the welfare system/governance regime in each country. Therefore, according to our results, the involvement is low in Scandinavian countries and Germany and higher in Ireland and Italy.

Social inclusion through entrepreneurship/entrepreneurship education depends greatly on local capacity for action and mobilisation.

And support for social inclusion remains fragmented and lacks a comprehensive and long-term policy framework in Italy, Ireland and Germany as opposed to Scandinavian countries like Norway and Denmark.

The policy brief assesses the potential of entrepreneurs as a means of social integration of low-skilled vulnerable groups. It addresses the challenges faced by potential entrepreneurs from these groups in the creation of businesses and explore opportunities from their unique situation. The document also examines the various policy approaches adopted by our project partners in Denmark, Norway, Germany, Italy and Ireland to promote the establishment of businesses among vulnerable groups and highlights the key factors contributing to their success. As the final section of a series of national policy briefs, this publication is part of the comprehensive study done by the SIATE consortium on social inclusion in adults through entrepreneurship. This document provides a brief overview of the comparison analysis of national policy briefs from Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Germany and Norway on social inclusion of vulnerable adults through entrepreneurship. In addition, it focuses on the main conclusions and recommendations of the national conferences held between 2021 and 2023.

SIATE was created on the assumption that policy documents have insufficiently addressed social inclusion through entrepreneurship for marginalised, low-skilled groups. The main objective of the SIATE project is to establish the European Network for Entrepreneurship in Adult Education (ENTNET) with the specific aim of formulating a coherent approach at local, national and European level to utilise entrepreneurship education as a tool for social inclusion. In addition, the project has produced key documents, including five national policy briefs from Denmark, Ireland, Germany, Italy and Norway, a policy paper with European recommendations and a collection of over 208 capacity building materials, based on expert interviews, with recommendations on the use of methods and entrepreneurial educational tools for educators. The overall aim of the SIATE project is to facilitate the creation of local and national networks working with European partners to focus specifically on the social inclusion needs of low-skilled and migrant populations.

Our recommendation is based on a strategic development model in which key experts in the field of entrepreneurship were invited to make an important contribution to expanding our body of knowledge. Their valuable insights focused specifically on low-skilled and marginalised groups and shed light on social inclusion through entrepreneurship.

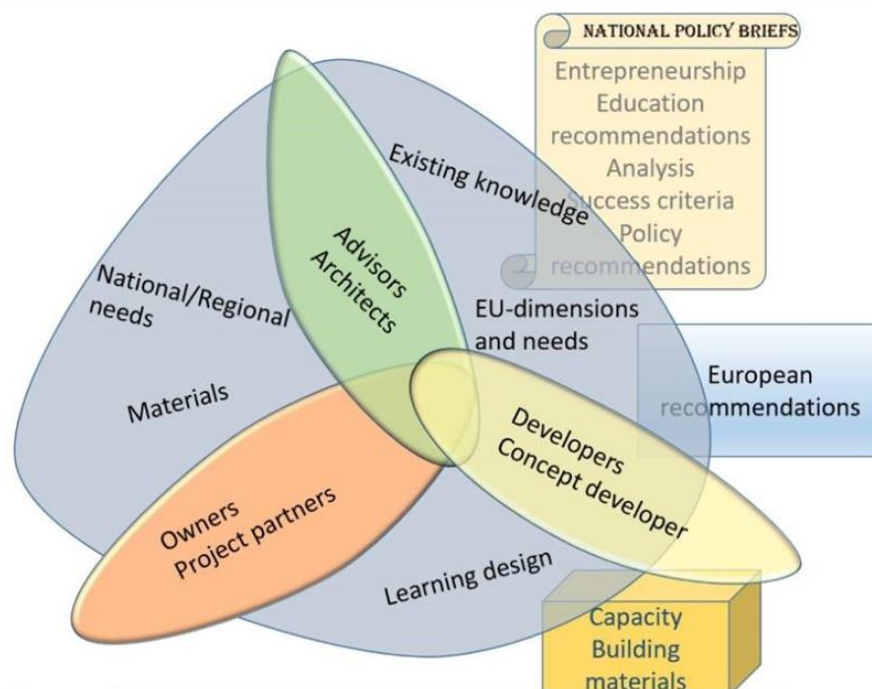


Fig. 1: Strategic development model- representation developed by VUC Storstrøm, Denmark

In 2019, 21.6% of EU adults aged 25-64, equivalent to 51.5 million people, lacked upper secondary education. Among them, 12.5 million had less than lower secondary education. The proportion of adults without upper secondary education is higher for foreign-born individuals (34.1%) compared to those born in the country (19.6%). Retraining and upskilling adults in precarious employment is a priority for the European Commission until 2030 (EC, 2021, p. 30-32). Therefore, entrepreneurship, including entrepreneurship education, could play a crucial role in socio-economic integration, providing access to better jobs (ILO 2018) and facilitating a smoother transition into the labor market (Alexandre-Leclair 2014).

Aligned with our objectives, we undertook the following research design:

Created a template to analyse the existing entrepreneurship education provision. Here a total number of 25 policies/measures/projects and courses were gathered and analysed, and an Entrepreneurship Education model was developed on how low- skilled vulnerable adults can successfully turn into entrepreneurs or learn on entrepreneurship education.

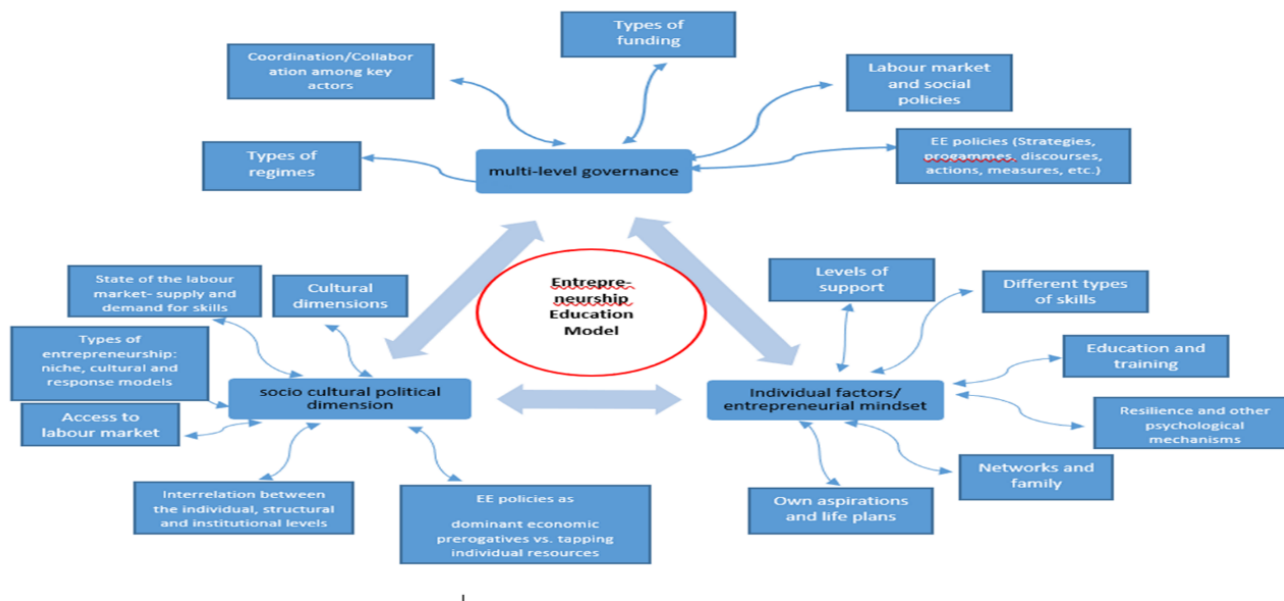


Fig. 2. Entrepreneurship Education Model; Boutiuc-Kaiser/Remmele, University of Education, 2021

Piloted our designed adult entrepreneurship education learning methods at conferences and made subsequent adjustments based on feedback. Here further frameworks were subsequently developed, a comparative spider web on Entrepreneurship Education provision as well as a checklist for practitioners and educators working with disadvantaged groups in the field of Entrepreneurship Education

Developed a European recommendation policy brief that will subsequently disseminate these recommendations for an advanced European approach to adult (low-skilled) entrepreneurship education.

In the following sections the main cross-national findings will be presented, based on the results obtained through the 5 national policy briefs.

Across Europe, entrepreneurship education (EE) policies often reflect the prevailing utilitarian emphasis on promoting 'employability'. However, it is crucial to recognise that an emphasis on employability does not automatically translate into promoting equity, empowering individuals or tackling poverty and social exclusion. Nonetheless, engagement in entrepreneurship holds the potential for socio-economic inclusion by providing pathways to better employment opportunities (ILO 2023¹) or help to earn a living, achieve a better social status, and have a smoother transition into the labour market (Alexandre-Leclair 2014²).

The need for improving coordination, data collection and monitoring at different levels. Entrepreneurship Education (EE) policies often operate at a national level, posing challenges in addressing regional/local nuances. The adaptability of these policies to diverse regions relies heavily on the effectiveness of local actors and the suitability of sub-national arrangements.

Special attention should be given to the collaboration between the public and private sectors, which is often characterised as challenging. Recognising regional variations is essential when defining the target groups for entrepreneurship education policies.

Accessible and relevant data play a fundamental role in effective EE policy planning, emphasising the importance of acknowledging diverse contexts, as functional equivalences are not universally guaranteed. Moreover, there is also a need to prioritise ongoing monitoring and evaluation of entrepreneurship programmes, focusing on their impact on unemployment rates and participant success.

The need to invest more in diverse and inclusive adult education and to take into consideration pre-migration skills as well as diverse backgrounds, therefore tailor-fit EE programmes and policies are needed. Nevertheless, it is essential to note that migrant entrepreneurs constitute a non-homogeneous group—engaging in varied sectors—and are not universally subject to vulnerabilities or marginalisation. In fact, many of the most important entrepreneurial successes have been achieved by migrants (this is particularly the case in Ireland).

The need to enhance the articulation between the educational, social system, and the labour market given that there is a lack of qualified personnel in all partner countries, which is often explained by the lack of continuous funding, leading to precarity among qualified personnel working with low-skilled groups in the field of entrepreneurship/entrepreneurship education. We can therefore speak of a double precarity.

Furthermore, the level of participation in entrepreneurship is significantly influenced by the economic situation of a country. In countries with a robust economic situation and a strong welfare system, such as Norway, Denmark, and Germany, there is a lower incentive to engage in entrepreneurship. Low-skilled individuals are more inclined to pursue employment or utilise welfare funds rather than establish a business or become self-employed.

The categorisation of Entrepreneurship Education (EE) low-skilled target groups as individuals with inadequate skills and a lack of basic competencies represents a deficit-oriented perspective. EE identifies these groups on the basis of perceived deficits, ascribing to individuals a lack of essential social, cultural and professional skills. This characterisation not only leads to a social stigmatisation of people who are perceived as low-skilled and unemployed, but also leads to a kind of "validation of vulnerability/marginalisation". This validation runs the risk of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy, especially as it contradicts the activation paradigm that underpins all EE policies analysed. Issues around migration are at the core of many EU initiatives at present and this aspect is critical.

The challenges in formulating strategies for integrating the most vulnerable arise because policies often leave behind precisely those in the most precarious situations. This occurs when individuals fail to meet minimum access criteria or are unable to participate due to a lack of a comprehensive approach to address their vulnerable conditions, such as inadequate financial support, area-specific language skills, insecure living conditions, or a lack of childcare. While it is comparatively easier to integrate the less vulnerable among this group, which contributes to higher success rates and overall well-being, there is a suggestion to prioritise greater attention to the most vulnerable, low-achievers, and adults at risk. It is important to recognise that

¹ International Labour Organisation (2023) Creating a conducive environment for women's entrepreneurship development: Taking stock of ILO efforts and looking ahead in a changing world of work. Retrieved from: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/---ifp_seed/documents/publication/wcms_876552.pdf

² Alexandre-Leclair, L. (2014). Diversity as a motive for entrepreneurship? The case of gender, culture and ethnicity. *Journal of Innovation Economics & Management*, 157-175.

migration brings additional challenges, including barriers related to racism, prejudice and outright hostility within migrant communities.

The need to simplify bureaucratic processes, promote inclusivity, gender diversity, and collaboration among policymakers, as well as promote innovative pedagogical practices for an entrepreneurial mindset among vulnerable groups. Moreover, it is important to optimise and adapt entrepreneurship training programs to meet evolving demands, maintaining flexibility and individual follow-up measures.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS / IMPACTS

Entrepreneurship education (EE) often refers to low-skilled target groups as people who lack basic skills and thus represents a negative view that can lead to social stigmatisation and a "certification of vulnerability/marginalisation". This characterisation contradicts the activation paradigm that underpins the EE policies.

EE policies foster a deficit-oriented approach, in which assisting vulnerable adults to get a job or create a business is paramount. In the debate between the 'utilitarian' and the 'holistic' understandings of EE, this approach clearly locates itself on the 'utilitarian' side.

Formulating E/EE strategies to integrate the most vulnerable is a challenge, as policies often exclude those who are in a vulnerable position due to insufficient support or a lack of comprehensive approaches addressing their vulnerable conditions. Prioritising attention to the most vulnerable, low-achievers, and adults at risk is suggested for improved social integration.

The need to increase the flexibility and accessibility of the educational offers and to actively involve vulnerable groups in decision making processes. This is particularly important in the context of migrant communities, as migrants generally have a high motivation for success, integration and new socio-economic advantages. Entrepreneurial models have a strong appeal to migrant women in countries where success rates are particularly high.

The need to invest in the continuous professional development of educators, with an emphasis on entrepreneurship education, ensuring they have the necessary skills and knowledge for delivering quality education.

The need to empower and prioritise listening to the aspirations and needs of vulnerable adults. It is imperative to recognise that education plays a crucial role in promoting social growth, as well as promoting pedagogical practices involving low-skilled adults.

- ***Comprehensive Collaboration for Real-World Impact:***
Entrepreneurship education (EE) should adopt a flexible approach capable of addressing challenges such as the low educational attainment of vulnerable groups, the changing demands of the labour market, the increasing participation of women in the labour market, the globalisation of markets, migration and precarious employment. Greater flexibility should be strategically implemented at regional and national level to enable a more differentiated and customised response to these changing dynamics. Moreover, the policymakers should be encouraged to embrace the involvement of vulnerable groups in policymaking and recognise their unique insights and talents.
- ***Investing in Professional Development of Educators:***
Prioritise the continuous professional development of educators in the field of entrepreneurship education to ensure that they have the required skills to provide quality education.
- ***Pedagogical Empowerment by Promoting Inclusivity, Gender Diversity and Tailored Support***
Promote tailored learning practices and initiatives in entrepreneurship education for under-represented groups. Creating and developing initiatives aimed at increasing the number of women entrepreneurs and migrants promoting social inclusivity. Specific attention should be given to the potential for migrant communities to succeed in entrepreneurial projects. Moreover, foster an open-minded approach to education policies, simplify bureaucratic processes, and promote inclusivity and diversity.
- ***Fostering an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem and Mindset:***
Fostering a supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem requires the establishment of co-working spaces, incubators and innovation centres. Strengthening collaboration between entrepreneurs, investors, academic institutions and industry experts is crucial for fostering knowledge sharing, stimulating idea creation and promoting overall business growth within the ecosystem. In addition, the development of EE policies is closely linked to the social, educational and economic context. Policy makers should consider the impact of governance systems, welfare systems and economic conditions on entrepreneurial commitment and adapt entrepreneurship policies accordingly to maximise effectiveness.
- ***Monitoring and Evaluating Program Effectiveness:***
Prioritise ongoing policy monitoring and evaluation, adapting to socio-economic changes, and replicate successful initiatives for vulnerable groups.
- ***Offer financial support and incentives:***
To reduce the burden of grant-seeking and financial barriers, specific funding mechanisms, such as grants, loans, and microfinance programs, should be tailored for unemployed individuals starting businesses. Additionally, financial incentives like tax breaks, subsidies, or reduced regulatory burdens can play a crucial role in encouraging entrepreneurship.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIATE PROJECT

PROJECT NAME	Social Inclusion of Adults through Entrepreneurship: SIATE
COORDINATOR	VUC Storstrøm, Denmark
CONSORTIUM	VUC Fyn (Denmark), Fønix (Norway), Pädagogische Hochschule Freiburg (Germany), Archivio della Memoria (AdM) (Italy) and Universal Learning Systems (ULS) (Ireland).
FUNDING SCHEME	ERASMUS+ KA3
DURATION	01.12.2020-31.10.2023
BUDGET	EU contribution: 366 610
WEBSITE	https://www.siate.eu/
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FURTHER READING	European Network for Entrepreneurship in Adult Education (ENTNET) https://www.entnet.education/

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