



INNOVATE Policy Brief

Strengthening Communication for Inclusive, Effective Migrant Entrepreneurship Support

Olivia Long
Migration Policy Group

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The INNOVATE project aims to facilitate a step change in the types, scope, forms and impacts of Migration Research to Policy (MR2P) engagement. It does so through a series of Actions that develop, test, apply and communicate Process Innovations that are grounded in the needs and interests of researchers, policymakers and other key stakeholders, including migrants, that are engaged with migration issues across governance levels from the local to the international. It embeds these within an MR2P Co-Lab with both a 'real' and 'virtual' presence comprising a Research Exchange, Engagement Hub and Training Facility.

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Evidence-Based Change for Inclusive Societies.

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Executive Summary

Effective communication plays a vital role in the success of migrant entrepreneurship support systems. It shapes the sharing of information, the building of trust and the accessibility of services designed for aspiring or established migrant entrepreneurs. Across Europe, actors at all levels - policy makers, public institutions, NGOs, CSOs, private sector actors and migrant-led organisations - are involved in outreach and support activities. The ways in which these actors communicate with migrant communities, as well as with each other, are often fragmented, inconsistent, or insufficiently tailored to diverse needs. Communication between migrant entrepreneurs themselves can be a powerful tool for knowledge-sharing and community-based support, but remains underexplored in many existing frameworks.

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1. Introduction

A growing body of literature points to communication as critical to the facilitation of inclusive, effective migrant entrepreneurship support ecosystems. Reports from the OECD and the European Commission highlight that many migrant entrepreneurs lack access to clear, timely, and relevant information, especially in the early stages of business creation, and are disproportionately affected by language barriers and digital exclusion (OECD/EU 2016; European Commission, 2020). The MEGA Handbook on Reaching out to the most vulnerable group among migrant entrepreneurs (MEGA project 2020) underscores the need for communication strategies that are multilingual, interculturally competent, and embedded in local service delivery mechanisms, particularly where migrants face complex legal, administrative, and financial environments.

Several EU-funded initiatives have sought to employ these principles. The European Migrant Entrepreneurship Network (EMEN), the Migrant Entrepreneurship Growth Agenda (MEGA) initiative, and the MIG.EN.CUBE project ('Fostering MIGrant Entrepreneurship inCUBation in Europe'), for example, have developed practical tools, training schemes, and policy recommendations to support service providers in reaching and supporting diverse migrant groups. Their findings demonstrate that communication should be treated as a foundational element of support systems, embedded across all outreach, coaching, mentoring and incubation services.

In particular, these initiatives emphasise the value of peer-to-peer communication and participatory knowledge sharing, facilitated via accessible digital platforms and narrative methods such as storytelling and the mutual exchange of personal experiences. The EMEN project, for example, developed communities of practice (COPs) that relied heavily on cross-sectoral, multilingual communication between practitioners, while MIG.EN.CUBE designed learning tools for incubation professionals working in environments that are linguistically and culturally diverse. These approaches demonstrate the importance of inclusive messaging, trust-building, and horizontal information flows, particularly in contexts where migrants may be unfamiliar with the host country's business norms, public institutions, or support systems.

This policy brief draws on this body of work, together with insights from benchmarking research carried out in Munich and Turin, to assess the current state of communication practices in migrant entrepreneurship support. It identifies challenges and emerging opportunities, and proposes recommendations for policy makers and practitioners aiming to strengthen communication as a pillar of inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystems. By embedding communication within service delivery, ecosystem coordination, and policy design, cities and regions can better support the entrepreneurial aspirations of migrants and enhance the social and economic impact of migrant-led businesses across Europe.



2. Wider Context

In recent years, policy frameworks and funding mechanisms at all levels have increasingly taken into account the importance of effective communication in migrant entrepreneurship support. At the EU level, instruments such as the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) have supported initiatives that link social inclusion, language learning, and labour market access, often incorporating targeted communication strategies for migrant communities. Under Erasmus+, the Key Action 2 stream – focused on cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices – has financed transnational partnerships that explore digital tools, intercultural training, and community-based outreach approaches relevant to migrant entrepreneurship ecosystems. Calls for projects related to the EU's entrepreneurship and SME policies have aimed to foster networks of support providers and promote communication across member states through multilingual outreach, peer learning and capacity-building.

These funding priorities reflect a wider policy shift from treating communication as a secondary operational concern to positioning it as a fundamental component of programme design. Linguistic diversity, low digital literacy, and inconsistent messaging continue to pose barriers for many migrant entrepreneurs navigating support systems (Kašperová et al., n.d, p.28, 35). Despite being perceived as an essential business skill, language support remains the most overlooked area of support for migrant entrepreneurs, with only 12% of the 176 measures analysed in EU and OECD countries focusing on language support (Solano, 2021, p.38-39). In contrast, inclusive communication – that is delivered in multiple languages, accessible across digital platforms, and informed by the needs of diverse user groups – is increasingly acknowledged as essential to ensuring that support services are both visible and effective.

Despite this progress, challenges remain. Communication practices are often fragmented between institutions and across different levels, and not always adapted to the specific legal, social, and linguistic contexts in which migrant entrepreneurs operate. There is ongoing need for investment in tailored language support, co-designed outreach methods, and accessible digital infrastructure. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated entrepreneurs' use of digital platforms. While this lowered entry barriers for migrant entrepreneurs and expanded their market reach, internal communication challenges persist (e.g., misunderstandings, weak team cohesion). It also served to reinforced inequalities in other ways, with highly skilled entrepreneurs gaining cross-border flexibility while offline workers faced growing precarity (Andrejuk, 2021).

The current EU funding landscape offers important opportunities to address these gaps, particularly through integrated, multi-stakeholder approaches supported under ESF+, AMIF, Erasmus+ KA2 and relevant calls issued by COSME, the EU programme for the competitiveness of enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) which ran from 2014 - 2020, and the Single Market Programme (SMP). As the EU's policy frameworks evolve, embedding communication as an integral element of entrepreneurship support will be critical to ensuring more inclusive and effective outcomes.

3. Benchmarking Results in Two Cities

Via service mapping and benchmarking research, the INNOVATE Migration Research to Policy Co-Lab examined existing migrant entrepreneurship support in two participating cities: Munich and Turin. In both cities, communication is formally recognised as a key component of migrant entrepreneurship support. Each city has integrated dedicated measures aiming to increasing outreach and awareness among migrant communities, although the level of development and focus of these varies.

Munich demonstrates a relatively advanced approach to communication and awareness-building. The municipality regularly collaborates with migrant associations and community leaders to act as multipliers, extending the reach and visibility of support services. It also sponsors public events and campaigns that celebrate the contributions of migrant entrepreneurs and promote the value of a diverse business community, such as the biannual PhönixPreis, which recognises migrants' outstanding economic achievements to the city. Additionally, support services such as administrative advice and business planning are offered in several languages, helping to mitigate language barriers and increase access for non-native speakers.

Turin similarly employs a communication strategy that includes cooperation with migrant associations and community leaders. Public campaigns and events are used to highlight the role of migrant entrepreneurs, helping to build public appreciation and strengthen local engagement. Despite this, the benchmarking research suggests that language-accessible service provision may be less developed here, with fewer multilingual offerings noted across support areas. This points to potential challenges in digital and linguistic inclusivity, particularly when services are primarily delivered through counselling rather than more scalable formats like online or classroom-based training.

In both cities, communication is closely tied to stakeholder cooperation. Municipal agencies actively coordinate with civil society actors, including migrant-led associations, to inform and adapt their outreach strategies. While these efforts reflect an awareness

of the importance of tailored communication, there is room to further embed digital tools, co-designed messaging, and multilingual platforms into city-level strategies. This would be particularly important for the better engagement of diverse groups of migrant entrepreneurs and would reduce barriers linked to language and digital access.

4. Challenges in Communications for Migrant Entrepreneurs

Language and linguistic accessibility

- Limited availability of multilingual support materials in business advisory, legal, financial or administrative services remains a key barrier in migrant entrepreneurship, especially for newly arrived migrants or refugees (MEGA Handbook, 2020; Rath & Swagerman, 2016; Kašperová et al., n.d., p.28).
- Services are often not tailored to different literacy levels, resulting in communication breakdowns with clients who may have strong oral skills but limited written proficiency in the host-country language (EMEN CoP1 publication, 2020).
- Translation is frequently ad hoc or informal: interpreting services are rarely institutionalised within entrepreneurship support programmes (NES, 2016).

Digital exclusion

- Many migrant entrepreneurs lack access to digital devices or stable internet. This problem is amplified in rural or temporary housing contexts (MIG.EN.CUBE, 2022).
- Even when access is available, low digital literacy can hinder engagement or reduce trust with support platforms, e-learning tools and application processes (EMEN 2020, MIG.EN.CUBE 2022; Yalçın & Akar, 2026, p.14-16).
- Communication channels used by institutions may not align with how migrant communities tend to access information. They might, for example, be used to relying on websites or email rather than social media platforms, messaging apps or community newsletters (MEGA, 2020).
- Those digital communication channels that are accessible to (some) migrant communities do not always share information that is in-line with – or up to date according to - official objectives or rules, risking the creation of parallel systems (Micinski, 2019, p.141-143).

Limited stakeholder coordination

- Communication responsibilities are often unclear or duplicated across support providers, leading to inconsistent messaging and service fragmentation (MEGA 2020, NES 2021).
- Migrant entrepreneurs may receive conflicting advice from different actors (municipalities; chambers; NGOs), which can serve to undermine trust in and uptake of services (NES, 2016).

- Lack of shared communication protocols or data-sharing infrastructure limits collaborative outreach and reduces the visibility of available services (MIG.EN.CUBE, 2022).
- Forums for stakeholder communication may remain informal, ad-hoc, or self-organised. A lack of institutionalised stakeholder collaboration risks unclear objectives and unreliable or fragmented communication (Knox & Arshed, 2022).

Underuse of narrative and peer-based communication

- Policy and service frameworks often fail to make use of peer networks and lived experiences as powerful, culturally relevant communication tools (EMEN 2020).
- Migrant entrepreneurs frequently lack role models and real-life examples from their own migrant communities. (MEGA 2020, EMEN 2020).
- Projects do not often incorporate storytelling, testimonials, or visual media. These communication methods have been shown to resonate with diverse audiences and to overcome literacy and language barriers (MIG.EN.CUBE, 2022).
- While increased digital support has ensured wider outreach, it also threatens to replace much needed personalised support services at the local level (Kašperová et al., n.d., p.54-55).

Limited cultural understanding

- Many initiatives make use of top-down, institutional language that can feel formal, bureaucratic, or irrelevant to migrant audiences (NES 2021, MEGA 2020).
- Services do not often account for different business cultures or entrepreneurial motivations among migrant communities, resulting in outreach that fails to connect with potential entrepreneurs (OECD/EU, 2016).
- Feedback systems are underdeveloped: although their effectiveness is often discussed, few initiatives employ mechanisms for two-way communication, participatory design, or regular input from migrant entrepreneurs themselves (MIG.EN.CUBE 2022, EMEN 2020).



5. Innovative Practices

Startup Refugees (Finland) runs 10-week multilingual entrepreneurship courses for refugees and other migrants, delivered in several languages to support legal navigation, business planning, and local networking. It is funded by public project grants, grants from private foundations and direct contributions from companies.

SINGA (Paris, France) is a social enterprise and entrepreneurship incubator offering host-community and migrant-led training and networking opportunities. It runs visibility campaigns spotlighting inspiring migrant entrepreneurs and communicates in multiple languages.

Mingo Migrant Enterprises (Vienna, Austria) offered business consultancy and referrals in 14 languages, enabling migrants to access mainstream support in their own language. It was initiated by the city's business agency with funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), later becoming part of the agency's ongoing startup coaching services.

EntryWay - Entrepreneurship Without Borders (Greece) – provided tailored entrepreneurship training for third-country nationals (TCNs), including multilingual and culturally adapted support materials. The project was also implemented in Italy, Germany, Spain and Sweden, and was co-funded by the EU via the Directorate-General for the Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW).

European-Ukrainian Hub (Denmark) offers workshops, online incubators, business tours, and communication skills training for Ukrainian entrepreneurs in Denmark, with multilingual, culturally accessible delivery across both physical hubs and digital channels. It is funded by the Danish Board of Business Development.

PhönixPreis (Phoenix Prize) (Munich, Germany) is a biannual prize awarded at a public event to entrepreneurs with a migration background from various sectors. Initially awarded on an annual basis for over ten years, it recognises outstanding contributions under three criteria: business development, creation and safeguarding of jobs and apprenticeships, and diversity within companies.

6. Recommendations for Policymakers and Policy Stakeholders

Truly effective communication promotes inclusion, trust and access to entrepreneurship opportunities. As migrant entrepreneurship ecosystems become more complex and diverse, the ability of their support services to communicate clearly and consistently becomes a key determinant of their reach and impact. Communication must therefore be embedded into the core of programme design and delivery, rather than treated as a peripheral or technical function.

The EU and its member states have already made important strides in recognising the role of communication, particularly through funding mechanisms such as ESF+, AMIF, and Erasmus+. Persistent gaps remain, however, particularly with regard to multilingual accessibility, digital inclusion, and participatory engagement. To ensure that support reaches those who need it most, policymakers and practitioners at all levels must take a more strategic, coordinated and user-informed approach to communication. The following recommendations are designed to support this shift.

1. Multilingual, culturally responsive communication

- Include multilingual communication and intercultural competence as core priorities in future funding calls under AMIF, ESF+, Erasmus+, and the SMP.
- Develop national standards or guidelines for multilingual service provision in entrepreneurship support at all levels.
- Offer advisory and training services in multiple languages. Service providers at local level, in particular, could partner with local community leaders to adapt communication to diverse cultural and literacy contexts.

2. Digital inclusion and accessible platforms

- Support transnational projects that develop and scale accessible digital tools tailored to migrant entrepreneurs (this could be a priority for EU-level funding).
- Fund digital skills programmes targeting migrants and incorporate digital literacy into broader entrepreneurship curricula. A national-level focus would be particularly useful here.
- Make use of platforms (e.g. WhatsApp, Facebook, local media) to disseminate service information; ensure mobile-friendly access to support services.

3. Peer-to-peer and narrative-based approaches

- The exchange and documentation of good practices on peer mentoring and storytelling could be encouraged at EU level, across member states.
- Promote migrant role models in campaigns at national / local level; fund mentorship schemes that draw on migrant entrepreneurs' lived experience.

- Facilitate peer support networks, storytelling workshops, and migrant-led visibility campaigns at local level to build trust and foster community learning.

4. Ecosystem coordination and strategic messaging

- Fund initiatives that strengthen cross-border and multi-stakeholder coordination on outreach and communication strategies.
- Map existing actors and define clear communication responsibilities across public, private, and third-sector organisations.
- Create coordination forums for service providers at local / regional level; develop shared outreach calendars and joint campaigns to ensure consistency and avoid duplication.
- Create – and make funding available for - opportunities to celebrate and publicise the significant economic contributions and achievements of migrant entrepreneurs.

5. Participatory design and feedback mechanisms

- Require EU-funded projects to demonstrate participatory methods and user feedback mechanisms in communication strategies.
- Develop participatory guidelines for programme design, including consultation with migrant entrepreneurs.
- Co-design communication materials with migrant communities; implement regular feedback mechanisms (surveys; focus groups) to refine messaging and delivery.

6. Funding and policy integration

- Mainstream communication-related costs into EU funding instruments and policy frameworks for entrepreneurship support.
- Ensure that communication is recognised as an eligible cost in co-funded programmes; provide technical guidance on this to implementing bodies.
- Allocate local budgets to supporting tailored, community-based communication strategies; monitor and evaluate the communication impact of entrepreneurship programmes.



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