

Deep dives

Migrant entrepreneurship for social inclusion:

Comparative reflections from a parallel programme in two cities

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This research report is part of the [INNOVATE project](#). INNOVATE aims to bring about *significant changes* in the nature and impact of *migration research on policy* through a series of innovations designed around the needs and interests of researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

The project has established the [Migration Research to Policy Co-Lab](#), which has both a physical and virtual presence and includes a Research Exchange, Engagement Hub, and Training Facility.

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Migrant entrepreneurship for social inclusion:
Comparative reflections from a parallel programme in two cities

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Executive Summary

This 'Deep Dive' report analyses the research-to-policy approach tested by the INNOVATE Process Innovation Action (PIA) Integration and long-term inclusion through self-em support ecosystem. Implemented in Munich and Turin during 2025-26, the action aimed to strengthen local ecosystems for migrant entrepreneurship through an evidence-guided, multi-stakeholder process combining needs assessment, research input, pilot implementation and sustainability planning.

Migrant entrepreneurship plays a significant role in economic resilience and social inclusion across European cities. Yet support systems often remain fragmented, insufficiently coordinated, linguistically inaccessible and poorly aligned with the structural realities migrants face on a daily basis. This PIA sought to address these gaps by embedding research into local policy dialogue and moving beyond discussion towards practical experimentation.

The INNOVATE approach combined several components, **implemented across three phases:**

- a structured multi-stakeholder Round Table process involving municipal actors, support organisations, migrant representatives and researchers;
- a systematic needs assessment based on research-derived indicators of effective migrant entrepreneurship support;
- tailored policy briefs responding to knowledge needs identified by stakeholders;
- research expertise providing academic feedback and reflection;
- the implementation of pilot actions addressing locally identified gaps;
- parallel implementation in two cities with transnational exchange and mutual learning.

The parallel implementation in Munich and Turin was designed to enable mutual feedback, comparative reflection and shared learning, thereby strengthening both local processes and the overall research-to-policy model.

Phase 1: Evidence-based, multi-stakeholder needs assessment

Stakeholders in each city were convened in a structured Round Table process supported by expert researchers. Through ecosystem mapping, benchmarking using research-derived indicators, and deliberative discussion, participants identified strengths, gaps and priority

areas for improvement. Tailored policy briefs on coordination, communication and access to finance, produced by the researchers, informed discussions.

A dedicated transnational meeting in Munich brought stakeholders from both cities together to compare findings and refine priorities. This exchange marked a pivotal moment in the process, consolidating shared diagnosis and laying the foundation for pilot implementation.

Ahead of the meeting, Draft Way Forward Notes were produced, defining key development priorities and identifying one area for pilot implementation in each city.

Phase 2: Development and implementation of pilot actions

In both cities, a pilot action was developed to address a selected structural gap in the support ecosystem. In Munich, the MigraFounders platform was launched as a multilingual, digital, 'one-stop' access and mentoring ecosystem. In Turin, the pilot consolidated entrepreneurship support and social mediation within Spazio Comune ('*Common Space*'), aiming to institutionalise an integrated desk for financial inclusion and self-employment. Pilot development was supported by research feedback, peer exchange and insights from international good practices.

Phase 3: Evaluation, sustainability and dissemination

The final phase focused on evaluating both the pilot actions and the multi-stakeholder process itself, finalising the Way Forward documents based on the pilot action experience and exploring upscaling and mainstreaming options, and producing tools for replication.

Across both cities, structural rather than individual barriers emerged as a central theme. In Munich, stakeholders identified fragmentation of services, lack of centralised multilingual access to information, limited mentorship opportunities, digital and bureaucratic barriers, and insufficient policy coordination. In Turin, development needs centred on governance fragmentation, limited access to finance, insufficient coordination between institutional actors, challenges in skills recognition, the need for stronger cultural mediation, and weak data and monitoring mechanisms.

The Way Forward Notes document intended policy adjustments and strengthened commitments across areas such as coordination, accessibility, financial inclusion, mediation and data use. Interview feedback indicates that participants particularly valued the structured needs assessment, the opportunity for sustained exchange across institutional systems, and the practical testing of solutions through pilot actions. At the same time, stakeholders emphasised that continuity and institutional anchoring are essential for sustainable ecosystem change.

Overall, the INNOVATE experience demonstrates that combining structured stakeholder engagement, research-based assessment tools and practical experimentation can strengthen evidence-informed policymaking at the local level.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and context

Migrant entrepreneurship contributes significantly to innovation, employment creation and economic inclusion in European cities. Migrants are often disproportionately represented among business founders, but their ventures frequently face structural constraints, including limited access to finance, language barriers, fragmented advisory systems and complex regulations.

Support for migrant entrepreneurship is typically distributed across multiple actors and governance levels. Municipal authorities, regional administrations, chambers of commerce, financial institutions, civil society organisations and migrant associations all play partial roles. This multi-actor landscape creates opportunities for collaboration but also risks fragmentation and duplication.

The INNOVATE project aimed to enhance dialogues on migration policies and practices by testing structured research-to-policy formats. Work Package 6, implemented by the International Rescue Committee (IRC Italy) and Migration Policy Group (MPG) and within which this Deep Dive has been produced, focused specifically on migrant entrepreneurship and long-term inclusion through self-employment.

1.2 Purpose of this Deep Dive

This Deep Dive has two objectives:

1. To document the research-to-policy model tested in Munich and Turin;
2. To formally assess its contribution to learning, coordination and intended policy development.

The report therefore examines both the functioning of the multi-stakeholder process and the development and implementation of pilot actions, drawing directly on project documentation and impact interviews.

2. Conceptual Foundations

2.1 Migrant entrepreneurship and ecosystems

Entrepreneurship outcomes are shaped not only by individual capabilities but by the surrounding ecosystem of institutions, regulations, markets and support services. Where ecosystems are fragmented or inaccessible, even highly motivated entrepreneurs may struggle to start, sustain and grow businesses.

Research highlights the importance of coordination across actors, accessible entry points, recognition of competences, inclusive communication and coherent financial pathways. For migrant entrepreneurs in particular, structural barriers often outweigh individual deficits.

Strengthening migrant entrepreneurship support therefore requires improvements in ecosystem governance rather than solely focusing on individual-level interventions.

2.2 Evidence-informed, multi-stakeholder governance

Multi-stakeholder engagement is widely promoted in integration and economic development policy. Proper structure and evidence input must be ensured to avoid the risk of this engagement remaining consultative rather than transformative. Integrating research systematically into policymaking processes requires:

- structured needs assessment to reduce blind spots;
- translation of international research into accessible, locally relevant formats;
- continuous interaction between researchers and practitioners;
- iterative validation of findings;
- clear articulation of follow-up actions.

The INNOVATE model was designed around these principles.

2.3 Turning dialogue into action

A recurring limitation of stakeholder dialogue processes is the absence of practical follow-up. INNOVATE addressed this gap by linking deliberation to pilot implementation.

Pilot actions function as experimental spaces to test solutions, generate implementation learning, reveal operational constraints and demonstrate proof of concept. In this way, analytical findings can be translated into practical ecosystem innovation.

3. The INNOVATE Research-to-Policy Model

This innovation action was designed as a structured, phased research-to-policy process combining evidence-based needs assessment, pilot implementation and sustainability planning. The model was implemented through a series of six Round Table meetings supported by research input, benchmarking tools and coordinated follow-up, with each meeting building on the previous one.

The action was designed as a parallel process in two cities rather than as two independent local pilots. Munich and Turin implemented the same research-to-policy format over the same period, allowing for continuous mutual observation, feedback and reflection. Transnational exchange was embedded throughout the process to enable stakeholders and implementing partners to compare approaches, reflect on differing governance contexts and adapt solutions accordingly. Thus, the project also contributed to building and strengthening a transnational community of practice dedicated to migrant inclusion through self-employment.

3.1 Phase One: Evidence-based, multi-stakeholder needs assessment

3.1.1 Establishment of the Round Table

The process began with the establishment of a multi-stakeholder Round Table. Participants included:

- municipal departments responsible for economic development, integration and related portfolios;
- business support organisations;
- chambers of commerce and financial actors;
- migrant organisations and representatives;
- research experts.

The aim was that the municipality would act as convener and process owner, ensuring political anchoring and institutional legitimacy. The research sounding board was integrated from the outset, with national researchers contributing expertise relevant to the local context and international researchers providing comparative input.

The coordination structure combined local and transnational elements. In each city, a subcontracted local coordinating partner convened and facilitated the Round Table, ensuring stakeholder mobilisation and operational management. In Munich, this was ReDI School and in Turin, Associazione Microlab. At the transnational level,

the Migration Policy Group (MPG) provided the methodological framework, developed the benchmarking tools and policy briefs, coordinated the research sounding board and supported peer exchange between cities. The action steering group comprised the the Department of Labor and Economy of the City of Munich, ReDI School, Associazione Microlab, International Rescue Committee and MPG.

3.1.2 Meeting 1 – Kick-off and ecosystem mapping

The first meeting introduced:

- the objectives of the innovation action;
- the overall structure of the process;
- roles and expectations of participants;
- the model (needs assessment, pilot implementation, evaluation and sustainability).

Participants began mapping the local migrant entrepreneurship support ecosystem, identifying existing services, actors and coordination mechanisms. This initial mapping exercise served to establish a shared understanding of the ecosystem and to prepare stakeholders for the structured benchmarking exercise.

3.1.3 Between meetings – Benchmarking and needs assessment




Following the first meeting, stakeholders completed a benchmarking questionnaire developed from international research on effective migrant entrepreneurship support measures. With 29 indicators overall, the questionnaire covered seven main areas of intervention:

1. Responsibility, strategy and policy development
2. Support services
3. Inclusive procurement and supplier diversity
4. Cooperation with external stakeholders
5. Data availability and use of data
6. Evaluation and impact assessment
7. Communication, awareness and appreciation

Within these dimensions, questions referred to such areas as:

- legal and regulatory advice;
- business support services;
- language and cultural accessibility;
- access to finance;
- mentoring and incubation;
- coordination and governance.

Responses were analysed to identify strengths, gaps and areas for development. To visualise the achieved level of development, results were depicted in a simple, colour-coded way for each benchmark.

Advanced level of development Services and activities are comprehensive and/or provided in a regular way	
Intermediate level of development Services and activities are partially implemented and/or provided only sometimes	
No development so far Services and activities are lacking	

3.1.4 Meeting 2 – Validation of needs assessment

In the second meeting, benchmarking results were presented and discussed collectively.

Participants validated findings, clarified discrepancies and refined the identification of development gaps. This stage marked a transition from general ecosystem mapping to more structured prioritisation. The discussion also drew on tailored policy briefs developed in response to the cities' knowledge needs, particularly on coordination mechanisms¹, communication and accessibility², and access to finance³. The research sounding board contributed feedback and contextualisation.

¹ Mojib Rahman Atal, *Strengthening Coordination to Support Migrant Entrepreneurship*. Migration Policy Group

² Olivia Long, *Strengthening Communication for Inclusive, Effective Migrant Entrepreneurship Support*. Migration Policy Group

³ Mojib Rahman Atal, *Strengthening Access to Finance for Migrant Entrepreneurs*. Migration Policy Group

Developing tailored policy briefs

In parallel to the needs assessment process, tailored policy briefs were developed by MPG to respond to knowledge gaps identified by stakeholders. Three topics were selected in consultation with local partners and reflected areas where additional evidence or comparative insight was considered useful for informed prioritisation:

- **Access to finance**
- **Coordination**
- **Communication**

The policy briefs synthesised international research and good practices and outlined potential policy recommendations. Their purpose was to provide an evidence-based perspective to inform Round Table discussions: they were shared with participants ahead of relevant meetings and served as reference documents during deliberation.

The briefs supported structured reflection on possible policy options and situated local challenges within broader European debates on migrant entrepreneurship support. In this way, they functioned as a translation tool between research evidence and local policy dialogue.

3.2 Phase Two: Development and implementation of pilot actions

3.2.1 Meeting 3 – Co-design of pilot actions

In the third meeting, participants moved from prioritisation to concrete proposal development. An action steering group was established in each city, comprising the municipality and local coordinating partners and supported by MPG.

Stakeholders discussed:

- the scope and objectives of potential pilot actions;
- criteria for selecting piloting organisations;
- expected beneficiaries;
- indicators for implementation and follow-up.

One priority area was selected in each city for pilot implementation.

3.2.2 Selection of piloting organisations

Piloting organisations were identified within the local support ecosystem. Selection criteria included:

- relevance to the identified structural gap;
- capacity for implementation within the timeframe;
- potential for sustainability beyond the project period;
- ability to contribute to measurable results.

In Munich, the pilot focused on the development of the MigraFounders multilingual digital platform as a centralised access and mentoring hub. In Turin, the pilot consolidated entrepreneurship support and social mediation within Spazio Comune ('*Common Space*'), integrating services for improved accessibility and financial inclusion.

MigraFounders in Munich

The Munich pilot action was developed in response to the needs assessment, which identified fragmentation of services, limited multilingual accessibility and insufficient coordination within the local support ecosystem for migrant entrepreneurship. Stakeholders agreed that improving access to existing services was a priority for strengthening long-term inclusion through self-employment.

The MigraFounders platform was **a multilingual digital entry point designed to improve transparency, coordination and navigation within the entrepreneurship support landscape**. Rather than introducing new parallel services, the platform was designed to connect existing advisory, mentoring and funding opportunities and make them more accessible to migrant entrepreneurs. It also facilitated mentoring and peer exchange, responding to gaps in individual support.

MigraFounders demonstrates how digital coordination tools can contribute to a more comprehensive and inclusive support system for migrant entrepreneurs.

Spazio Comune in Turin

In Turin, the multi-stakeholder process and needs assessment identified governance fragmentation, limited access to finance and a need for stronger integration between mediation and entrepreneurship support services.

The pilot action was **designed to strengthen entrepreneurship advisory and social mediation functions within Spazio Comune, a One-Stop-Shop hub promoted by UNHCR and the Municipality of Turin, and implemented by Associazione Mosaico since 2022, in order to ensure a more coordinated, accessible support environment for migrant entrepreneurs.** By aligning mediation services with business support and financial inclusion pathways, the action sought to reduce structural barriers related to language, administrative procedures and institutional complexity.

The initiative strengthened cooperation between the municipality, the Chamber of Commerce and other ecosystem actors, contributing to clearer governance and improved service coordination. Embedding the pilot within an existing municipal framework aimed to enhance sustainability beyond the close of the pilot period and illustrates how institutional consolidation and integrated service provision can support inclusion through self-employment in a fragmented governance context.

3.1.5 Meeting 4 – Transnational exchange and prioritisation of development needs

The fourth meeting was organised as a dedicated transnational exchange and took place in Munich, briefly after the launch of the pilot actions. This meeting was a pivotal moment in the process: it brought together multiple stakeholders from both cities in a joint setting for in-person engagement.

Participants presented findings from their respective needs assessments, the draft Way Forward Notes and reflected collectively on emerging development priorities and pilot project implementation. The transnational setting enabled comparison of governance structures, coordination challenges and support models across contexts. Common structural barriers, particularly fragmentation and accessibility gaps, became more clearly visible through comparative discussion.

A key moment of the meeting was the research sounding board session, dedicated to the reflections and evidence-based advice of invited academic experts and input from the tailored policy briefs written for the action. Prof. Monder Ram from Aston University

Birmingham and Anna Ferro from CeSPI Rome commented on the two cities' action plans and highlighted critical factors for success. Mojib Atal and Olivia Long from MPG contributed specifically on structural, informational, and cultural barriers to accessing finance as well as inclusive, multilingual, and trust-based communication. The practitioners in the room got engaged in a meaningful, in-depth conversation; directly touching on the challenges they had identified in their needs analysis and the pilot actions. The exchange revolved around issues of sustainability of emerging governance structures, gender-sensitive support, implications for urban development and broader societal participation of migrants, the territorial dimension of access to finance, and stakeholder cooperation extending to the mainstream economy and financial institutions.

Building on this exchange, stakeholders in each city refined and prioritised their development needs. Participants assessed which gaps were most urgent, had potential for structural impact and could realistically be addressed within the project timeframe. This meeting marked the transition from analysis to action and laid the foundation for the subsequent implementation of the pilot actions in Munich and Turin.

3.2.3 Peer-to-peer meetings - monitoring and exchange during implementation

Three transnational online peer-to-peer meetings, involving the piloting organisations and open to all stakeholders of the project, took place before and after the transnational fourth round table. They provided an opportunity to:

- present implementation progress;
- discuss operational challenges;
- gather feedback from stakeholders;
- integrate research sounding board input;
- exchange experiences across cities;
- feedback from a good practice in Sweden, sharing experience on the topics covered by the pilots.

Parallel implementation in Munich and Turin enabled transnational peer learning. While contexts differed, the exchange encouraged reflection on coordination mechanisms and sustainability strategies.

3.3 Phase Three: Evaluation, sustainability and dissemination

3.3.1 Meetings 5 and 6 - consolidation

The sixth and final Round Table meetings focused on reviewing pilot implementation, assessing progress against identified development needs, finalising the Way Forward Notes, and discussing sustainability and institutionalisation.

The Way Forward Notes articulate:

- agreed priorities;
- proposed measures;
- responsibilities and follow-up steps;
- potential pathways for mainstreaming.

This phase aimed to ensure that the process would have an impact beyond the project, contributing to incremental governance development within each city.

3.4 Process evolution across the six meetings

Across the meetings, the process evolved through three stages:

1. Shared diagnosis: establishing a common understanding of ecosystem strengths and gaps;
2. Prioritisation and design: selecting development needs and co-designing pilot responses;
3. Implementation and consolidation: testing solutions and articulating intended policy development.

The structured sequencing of meetings ensured continuity, accountability and cumulative learning, with the integration of research input throughout the process distinguishing the model from more *ad hoc* stakeholder consultations. The combination of benchmarking, policy briefs, sounding board feedback and pilot experimentation created the coherent research-to-policy cycle.

The parallel implementation in Munich and Turin was designed to enable structured transnational peer learning. This allowed each city to reflect on its own process through comparison with the other and to adapt approaches based on shared feedback and discussion.

Integrating evidence into decision-making and engaging with policymakers: Using the INNOVATE toolkit

Overall, the process design of the action was inspired by several recommendations of the Engagement Good Practices Toolkit developed for the INNOVATE Co-Lab.

These approaches are as follows:

- A deliberative method which encouraged structured dialogues in round tables, where different perspectives on possible policy solutions were considered.
- A process which ensured continuous participation, leading to co-creation of questions for inquiry and policy recommendations.
- An interactive format, allowing for consultation and collaborative sessions for meaningful and inclusive discussions.
- Mapping of relevant policy stakeholders beyond policymakers, to include service providers, the business sector, civil society actors and research actors.
- Inclusion of migrant-led organisations and initiatives, to empower them for participatory policymaking and advocacy for more legitimate and effective policies.
- Representation of affected communities, particularly migrants, refugees, and marginalised groups, throughout the engagement process.
- A setting that allowed policymakers and stakeholders to feel they contributed to the process and would be co-owners of results, rendering uptake more likely.
- Informal networking and relationship-building to gain stakeholders' trust.
- Stakeholder events with no more than 20 participants for meaningful discussions.
- Use of digital tools to facilitate stakeholder collaboration, including peer-to-peer online meetings, online depository of documents, and online surveys.
- Clarity on stakeholder roles and how each actor – policymakers, policy stakeholders, researchers – can contribute to policy development and action planning.
- Confidentiality and informed consent when collecting personal narratives or case studies.

- Feedback mechanisms to ensure stakeholders are informed of outcomes and next steps.
- Provision of tailored knowledge tools (policy briefs; benchmarking) to policy stakeholders, helping them to promote evidence-based policies.
- Identification of policy gaps to help policymakers recognise where current policies fall short and how research can inform improvements.
- Identification of topics aligned with the evolving agenda of policymakers, focusing on areas likely to remain relevant in the longer term.
- Action planning that balances feasibility and ambition, with solutions that can be realistically implemented while serving as a stepping stone for systemic change.
- Positive framing of recommendations as enhancements and areas where improvement can build on existing strengths.
- Pilot actions as easy-to-implement solutions that can be acted on quickly without requiring major structural change.

4. Methodology for assessment

This section outlines the methodology used to assess the INNOVATE research-to-policy action, including the evidence-based multi-stakeholder process, the development and implementation of pilot actions in Munich and Turin, and the intended policy and governance changes resulting from these activities.

4.1 Scope of the assessment

The assessment covers:

- the evidence-based multi-stakeholder needs assessment process;
- the development and implementation of pilot actions;
- the role of tailored policy briefs and research input;
- the production of Way Forward Notes as evidence of intended policy development;
- the perceived usefulness and learning effects of the action.

The objective is to evaluate whether and how the action contributed to strengthened dialogue, improved understanding of development needs, and articulation of intended policy measures.

4.2 Sources of evidence

The assessment draws on three sources:

1. Way Forward Notes produced in Munich and Turin.
2. Impact interviews conducted with key actors in each city (policymakers, support ecosystem stakeholders, and piloting organisations).
3. Policy briefs and project documentation informing the Round Table discussions.

The Way Forward Notes are treated as documentary evidence of intended policy or policy-related change resulting from the action.

4.3 Interview-based assessment structure

The impact interviews followed a common questionnaire addressing the following areas:

- Perceived usefulness of the entire process and its components.
- Learnings from the needs assessment, policy briefs, research sounding board feedback, pilot actions and transnational exchanges.
- Changed understanding of the problems at hand and their causes.
- Changed understanding of the support ecosystem and stakeholder interactions.
- Changed understanding of policy priorities and way forward.
- Intentions to draw on research evidence in future policymaking.

5. Findings

This section presents findings from the formal assessment of the innovation action. The analysis draws on:

- the Way Forward Notes produced in Munich and Turin, treated as documentary evidence of intended policy development resulting from the action;
- impact interviews conducted with policymakers, support ecosystem stakeholders and piloting organisations in both cities.⁴

5.1 Way Forward Notes as evidence of intended policy development

The Way Forward Notes represent the most concrete documentary outcome of the innovation action. They capture the agreed priorities and proposed measures identified through the needs assessment, Round Table discussions and pilot implementation.

5.1.1 Munich

The Munich Way Forward Note prioritises:

- improved coordination across support actors;
- creation of a centralised, multilingual access point;
- strengthening of mentoring structures;
- enhanced data collection and monitoring;

improved communication between municipal departments and support providers. These priorities reflect a clear shift towards ecosystem coordination and accessibility. The development of the MigraFounders platform is positioned as an essential digital tool as well as a structural response to fragmentation.

The Way Forward Note demonstrates an intention to improve governance coherence and service visibility. However, many of the measures remain framed as development goals rather than formally embedded policy commitments. While responsibilities are indicated, long-term resourcing and institutional anchoring depend on follow-up beyond the project period. Overall, the Munich Way Forward Note reflects incremental but concrete intended improvements within the existing governance framework.

⁴ We are grateful to the following partners for facilitating, conducting and documenting the assessment interviews in the two cities: Horan Lee, City of Munich, Melis Özal, ReDI School Munich, Flaminia Delle Cese, IRC Italy, and Timothy Donato, Microlab Turin.

5.1.2 Turin

The Turin Way Forward Note prioritises:

- institutionalisation of coordinated support within Spazio Comune;
- strengthened access to finance pathways;
- integration of social mediation into entrepreneurship support;
- improved cooperation between the municipality, the Chamber of Commerce and regional actors;
- development of clearer governance structures.

Compared to Munich, the Turin Way Forward Note places stronger emphasis on institutional embedding. The integration of entrepreneurship support and mediation services within Spazio Comune reflects a governance-oriented approach rather than a primarily digital or communication-focused solution. This note suggests a more structural ambition, aiming to consolidate coordination within an identifiable institutional framework.

5.1.3 Comparative assessment

Across both cities, the Way Forward Notes demonstrate a shared recognition of structural barriers, prioritisation of coordination and accessibility, and alignment between identified needs and proposed measures (for details see textbox below). However, the institutional pathways differ: Munich focuses on improving visibility and coordination within a distributed system, while Turin focuses on consolidation within a centralised institutional platform.

Both documents provide evidence of intended policy or policy-related change. The extent to which these intentions translate into durable policy reform will depend on sustained political and administrative commitment.

Gaps, needs and the way forward for migrant entrepreneurship in Turin

The INNOVATE benchmarking process conducted in Turin highlighted an active but fragmented ecosystem for migrant entrepreneurship. The analysis identified five interconnected development needs:

First, governance fragmentation remains a core structural weakness. Although migrant entrepreneurship is increasingly recognised within Turin's broader integration agenda, responsibilities are dispersed across municipal departments, the Piedmont Region, the Chamber of Commerce, and civil society organisations. The absence of a permanent coordination mechanism and a dedicated municipal budget line undermines coherence and continuity. The establishment of a structured governance platform (bringing together public institutions, financial

actors, employer associations and migrant representatives) is therefore identified as a strategic priority for moving beyond project-based logic towards long-term systemic integration.

Second, access to finance and entrepreneurial services represents a persistent barrier. Migrant entrepreneurs often face limited access to traditional credit, relying heavily on microcredit institutions. Stakeholders call for tailored financial instruments, including guarantee funds, small grants and interest-free loans, particularly for women and early-stage entrepreneurs. Equally important is the simplification and integration of existing support services. The creation of a unified one-stop information and advisory desk would streamline administrative guidance, training, and financial counselling.

Third, competences and skills recognition require dual attention. Many migrants possess professional qualifications that remain under-recognised within the Italian system, while others need additional language, civic and bureaucratic literacy to navigate entrepreneurship pathways. The complex, purpose-based recognition system for foreign qualifications necessitates specialised guidance: strengthening the capacity of public and third-sector operators to support formal and informal skills recognition is essential to improve labour inclusion and self-employment outcomes.

Fourth, cultural mediation and community engagement are identified as foundational elements of effective policy. Mediation extends beyond linguistic support to encompass trust-building, accompaniment, and institutional translation. In Turin, Associazione Mosaico (managing Spazio Comune) plays a pivotal role in connecting communities with public services. This function is particularly crucial for women entrepreneurs, who face intersecting social and structural vulnerabilities. Gender-sensitive outreach, mentorship from successful migrant entrepreneurs and the active engagement of second-generation actors are key for inclusive participation.

Fifth, data gaps limit strategic policymaking. While basic statistics on migrant-owned enterprises exist, systematic, disaggregated data and longitudinal monitoring remain insufficient. Developing a shared interdepartmental dataset and tracking business survival and growth rates would enable evidence-based targeting and evaluation.

In response, the Action Plan proposes a phased strategy, starting with the pilot action within Spazio Comune. The pilot consolidates entrepreneurial support and social mediation services, creating a human-centred proof of concept. Its short-term objective is to ensure measurable evidence of effectiveness; its long-term aim is to institutionalise a Permanent Desk for financial inclusion and self-employment and establish a multi-level governance platform involving the municipality, region, and Chamber of Commerce.

Sustainability relies on dual anchoring here: operational mainstreaming within municipal structures and strategic political alignment with regional authorities.

Engagement methods include embedding policymakers in pilot monitoring activities, fostering multi-level working groups, strengthening data systems, and promoting inclusive co-design with migrant-led organisations.

Gaps, needs and way forward for migrant entrepreneurship in Munich

In Munich, the findings of the Round Tables and the benchmarking revealed a well-developed yet highly fragmented support landscape. Although numerous initiatives target founders and migrant communities, these operate largely in parallel, creating complexity, limited visibility, and access barriers for migrant entrepreneurs, particularly those outside established professional networks. The analysis underscored the need for coordinated, inclusive and digitally accessible infrastructure.

Four key development needs were identified. *First*, there are significant limitations in communication and visibility. Migrant entrepreneurs often lack access to consolidated, multilingual, culturally sensitive information about funding schemes, advisory services, legal requirements and networking opportunities, with the absence of a central entry point leading to confusion and missed opportunities.

Second, mentorship and peer-learning opportunities remain limited. Many migrant founders struggle to connect with experienced mentors who understand both entrepreneurial challenges and the lived realities of migration. Without access to professional communities and growth-oriented guidance, business sustainability and scaling potential remain constrained.

Third, digital and bureaucratic barriers hinder participation. Administrative complexity, language gaps, and insufficiently user-friendly digital tools make it difficult for newcomers to navigate Munich's entrepreneurial ecosystem. These structural hurdles can reinforce precarious forms of self-employment rather than fostering stable business development.

Fourth, stronger policy coordination is needed. Municipal departments, academic actors, business support agencies and community organisations frequently operate without sufficient exchange. Improved cross-sector communication and strategic alignment would lead to a more coherent and inclusive entrepreneurial environment.

Based on the needs analysis, central policy-relevant fields of action were identified. The focus was on translating identified challenges into concrete action. Particular attention was paid to:

- structural access issues and information architecture;
- governance and coordination mechanisms between actors;

- the potential of digital tools to reduce institutional hurdles;
- the long-term institutional anchoring of inclusive support approaches.

These fields of action formed the basis for thematic policy inputs and were incorporated into the strategic perspective for Munich. The MigraFounders pilot action is considered a key stepping stone, designed to centralise information, strengthen visibility and foster participation among migrant entrepreneurs. It is to function as a multilingual, one-stop access point, featuring a searchable business directory, mentor-matching system, and a funding and legal resource centre. Particular emphasis is placed on facilitating access to financial instruments through collaboration with local banking institutions.

Through these activities, MigraFounders addresses structural fragmentation in Munich's support ecosystem for migrant entrepreneurs by combining digital infrastructure, inclusive communication, and cross-sector collaboration. It is seen as a main impetus for the further development of coordination structures and the institutional anchoring of inclusive measures. If successfully institutionalised and supported by municipal visibility and co-financing, the initiative offers a scalable model for strengthening integration through migrant entrepreneurship.

5.2 Interview-based assessment

The following findings are derived directly from the impact interviews and reflect participants' own assessments of the process and its outcomes.

5.2.1 Perceived usefulness of the entire process and its components

Across both cities, interviewees consistently described the structured Round Table format as valuable. Participants emphasised that the recurring nature of meetings created continuity and accountability, distinguishing the process from one-off consultations.

In Munich, respondents frequently referred to improved transparency and overview of the ecosystem. The process was described as enabling participants "to see the whole picture" of migrant entrepreneurship support. One interviewee noted:

“The round table provided a valuable platform for structured exchange between a diverse range of stakeholders, including practitioners, policymakers, and researchers. In particular, the discussions around existing support structures, access barriers, and gaps in the current ecosystem helped to contextualise our own work and identify areas where our programs align with broader systemic needs.”

This indicates that while both cities valued the format, its perceived added value reflected local governance contexts: overview and transparency in Munich; institutional coordination in Turin.

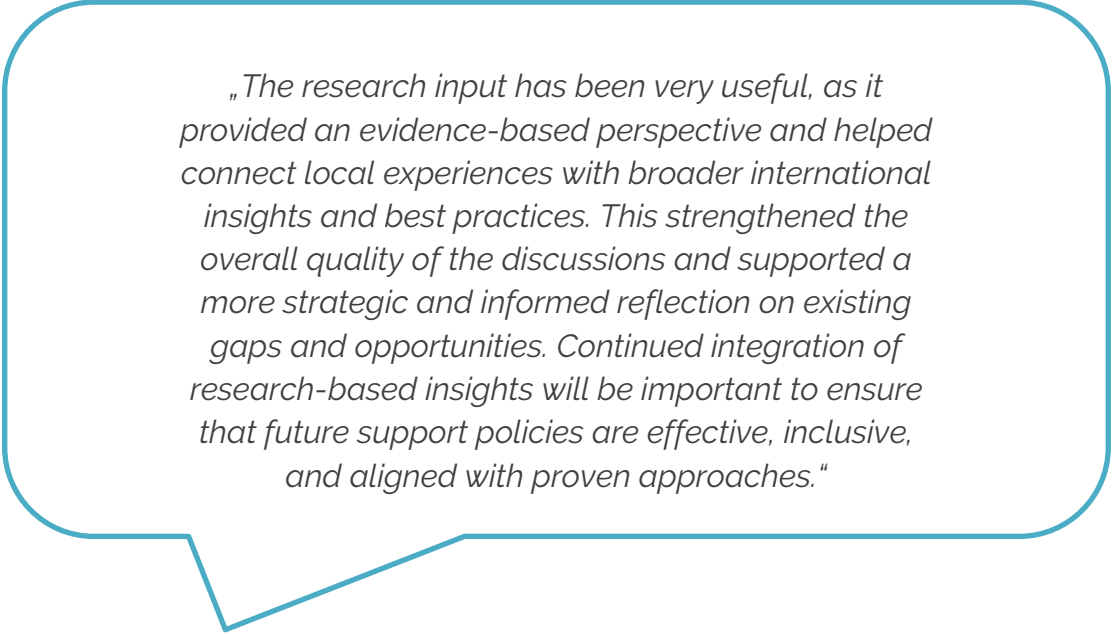
5.2.2 Learnings from the needs assessment

Interview feedback confirms that the benchmarking exercise played a central role in structuring discussions. Participants in both cities reported that the needs assessment shifted the focus from individual entrepreneurs' deficits towards systemic gaps. In Munich, this was articulated as a move from discussing “entrepreneurs' weaknesses” to identifying “system gaps”. In Turin, respondents emphasised that fragmentation and governance disconnects became more visible through structured reflection.

The collective validation of benchmarking results during meetings was frequently mentioned as particularly important. The process was valued not only for producing data, but for enabling shared interpretation. This suggests that the needs assessment functioned effectively as a diagnostic tool within the research-to-policy format.

5.2.3 Contribution of policy briefs and research sounding board

Interviewees in both cities acknowledged that the tailored policy briefs and research sounding board strengthened the evidence-informed character of the process. One said:



„The research input has been very useful, as it provided an evidence-based perspective and helped connect local experiences with broader international insights and best practices. This strengthened the overall quality of the discussions and supported a more strategic and informed reflection on existing gaps and opportunities. Continued integration of research-based insights will be important to ensure that future support policies are effective, inclusive, and aligned with proven approaches.“

Participants described the policy briefs as useful reference documents, providing comparative perspectives and examples from other contexts. While time constraints limited in-depth discussion of all materials, their presence contributed to informed prioritisation. A municipal participant in Turin reflected that while the research input was stimulating, *“at times, there was so much information that I did not have the time to process it and turn it into concrete actions, but the direction is the right one”*.

The research sounding board was widely perceived as enhancing credibility. In Turin in particular, academic confirmation that identified challenges were structural was described as adding weight to local observations. This indicates that the integration of research input contributed to legitimising structural reframing and strengthening confidence in proposed measures.

5.2.4 Learning from pilot implementation

Interviewees in both cities emphasised that pilot implementation was essential for moving from dialogue to action. In Munich, development of the multilingual platform highlighted practical challenges related to information maintenance and inter-organisational coordination. In Turin, integration of mediation services revealed operational complexities in aligning institutional responsibilities.

Participants described the pilots as “testing grounds” for coordinated support models. A municipal representative in Turin emphasised the perceived value and sustainability potential of the pilot:

"...The result was a coherent and useful 'pilot' which, as an administration, we would really like to see remain part of the city's heritage and continue to live on in the area."

Cross-city comparison shows different emphases: Munich's pilot was perceived primarily as improving accessibility and visibility, while Turin's pilot was perceived as strengthening institutional coordination and embedding support within governance structures. The pilot phase thus served as a practical complement to diagnostic dialogue.

5.2.5 Changed understanding of problems and their causes

A recurring theme across interviews was a shift in problem framing. Participants in both cities reported greater recognition of structural barriers, including fragmentation, governance complexity and accessibility challenges. One interviewee in Munich explained:

"In particular, it is becoming clearer that the difficulties faced by migrant entrepreneurs are often not due to a lack of motivation or qualifications, but to structural barriers. (...) This (affects) above all the complexity of administrative procedures, the multitude of confusing offers, and the lack of low-threshold introductory information. This insight supports more realistic expectation

This reframing is directly linked to the structured needs assessment and collective dialogue format, representing a key outcome of the research-to-policy approach.

5.2.6 Changed understanding of stakeholder interactions

Interviewees reported improved awareness of other actors' roles and mandates. In Munich, this manifested as improved understanding of interactions between municipal departments and external support providers. In Turin, strengthened connections between mediation services, financial actors and municipal structures

were highlighted. Relational learning was evident in both contexts, though more formally institutionalised in Turin through the Spazio Comune framework.

5.2.7 Changed understanding of policy priorities and way forward

Participants indicated that the process influenced prioritisation. In Munich, coordination and accessibility gained prominence as strategic priorities. In Turin, institutionalisation and financial inclusion pathways were emphasised.

The alignment between interview feedback and Way Forward Notes suggests coherence between dialogue outcomes and documented intended policy measures.

5.2.8 Intentions to draw on research evidence in future

Several interviewees expressed openness to continuing evidence-informed dialogue formats beyond the project period. However, sustainability was consistently linked to continued political commitment, institutional anchoring and resource allocation. This indicates that while the research-to-policy format was valued, its long-term continuation depends on governance conditions beyond the project's immediate scope.

6. Lessons learnt and conclusions

This section synthesises findings and reflects directly on the research-to-policy format.

6.1 Lessons on the multi-stakeholder format

The structured Round Table process proved effective in generating shared understanding and sustained dialogue. Recurring meetings, clear sequencing and municipal anchoring were critical factors. The process demonstrated that structured engagement is more impactful than ad hoc consultation, particularly when supported by benchmarking tools and documented outputs.

However, maintaining engagement requires clear institutional ownership and follow-up mechanisms beyond the project period.

6.2 Lessons on evidence-informed policymaking

The integration of benchmarking questionnaires, tailored policy briefs and a research sounding board contributed to evidence-informed discussion. Research input supported reframing of challenges as structural rather than individual, enhanced legitimacy and strengthened confidence in prioritised measures. It is clear that the

effective use of research input depends on sufficient time for discussion and clear integration into decision-making processes.

6.3 Lessons on linking dialogue to pilot implementation

The possibility of implementing pilot actions was a defining feature of this format. Pilots translated diagnostic findings into experimentation, revealing operational realities not fully visible during early discussion. This strengthened credibility and demonstrated tangible commitment. The experiences of Munich and Turin illustrate that pilot design must be aligned with local governance contexts: digital coordination in Munich; institutional consolidation in Turin.

Lessons on sustainability and institutionalisation

The action generated the intended policy commitments, as reflected in the Way Forward Notes. This aside, sustainability depends on continued political support; allocation of administrative resources; embedding coordination mechanisms within formal structures.

In Turin, institutional embedding within Spazio Comune provides a clearer pathway for continuity. In Munich, sustainability depends on maintaining and resourcing coordination mechanisms associated with the digital platform.

6.5 Overall reflections on the research-to-policy format

This research-to-policy format demonstrates that structured, evidence-guided, multi-stakeholder engagement can:

- improve shared understanding of ecosystem gaps;
- strengthen coordination;
- generate concrete pilot experimentation;
- produce documented intended policy development.

Its longer-term impact will depend on the extent to which identified measures become embedded within municipal and regional governance frameworks. The experience of Munich and Turin suggests that the format is transferable, provided that strong municipal anchoring, research integration and follow-up mechanisms are ensured.