

Competence Framework for Under-Represented Entrepreneurs

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1 Introduction





Introduction

Purpose of the MOSAIC Competence Framework

The MOSAIC Competence Framework aims to empower under-represented entrepreneurs in EU countries, drawing on experiences from the Netherlands, France, Ireland, Germany, Romania and Denmark - by identifying and fostering the essential skills and knowledge needed for their success. This framework serves as a strategic tool to bridge gaps in support systems, ensuring that entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds can overcome systemic barriers and biases.

By highlighting critical skills needed in different entrepreneurial areas, the framework provides a structured approach to developing innovation, strategic thinking and resilience. It emphasizes the importance of tailored education, mentoring and financial literacy, recognizing the unique challenges faced by under-represented groups.

Through extensive research and 42 interviews with entrepreneurs, educators and investors, the Framework captures the nuanced experiences and strategies that lead to successful businesses in different cultural and economic contexts.

Ultimately, this Competence Framework seeks to support individual entrepreneurial journeys and to contribute to broader societal change by encouraging a more inclusive and dynamic business environment.





Overview of Entrepreneurship and Its Importance

Entrepreneurship is a key driver of economic growth, innovation and social development. It involves the creation and management of new businesses, often characterized by innovative solutions to market needs and societal challenges. Entrepreneurs are key to boosting economic dynamism, creating jobs and strengthening competitiveness. As noted by Shane (2003) and Venkataraman (1997), entrepreneurship is "the link between entrepreneurial individuals and valuable opportunities", highlighting the essential role of individuals in exploiting opportunities for economic benefit.

The importance of entrepreneurship extends beyond economic impact. It contributes to social progress by addressing market gaps, especially those neglected by large corporations. For example, under-represented entrepreneurs bring diverse perspectives and solutions, which can lead to more inclusive and equitable markets. According to David B. Audretsch, „entrepreneurial capital“ positively influences economic performance by promoting innovation and adaptability across industries.

Moreover, entrepreneurship is crucial for **community development**, particularly in under-represented groups. By empowering individuals from diverse backgrounds, entrepreneurship helps reduce inequality and promotes social inclusion.



[1] Scott Shane , „ Opportunities and Entrepreneurship“, available at https://www.academia.edu/33995813/Opportunities_and_Entrepreneurship

[2] David B. Audretsch, Max Keilback , „Does Entrepreneurship Capital Matter?“ (2004), available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2004.00055.x>

[3] Funfeong Chan, „The Role of Entrepreneurship in Economic Inequality“ (2021), available at <https://www.atlantis-press.com/article/125957309.pdf>

[4] „Social Inclusion through Entrepreneurship“, article available at <https://ied.eu/blog/social-inclusion-through-entrepreneurship/>



2 Methodology



Methodology

Research Methods

The research methodology for this study involved conducting a total of 42 semi-structured interviews across six countries: Netherlands, France, Ireland, Germany, Romania, and Denmark. Each country included seven interviews: three with entrepreneurs, three with experts in entrepreneurship education, and one with an investor. This approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the entrepreneurial ecosystem from multiple perspectives. The semi-structured format allowed for the pre-set questions to explore emerging topics in-depth, facilitating a rich qualitative analysis of the experiences, challenges, and strategies of under-represented entrepreneurs and their support systems.



Framework Development Process

The development of the Competence Framework involved a multi-phase process to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Initially, a comprehensive literature review was conducted to identify existing competencies and gaps in entrepreneurship among under-represented groups. This was followed by the collection of primary data through 42 semi-structured interviews across six countries, including insights from entrepreneurs, experts, and investors. The qualitative data gathered was then analyzed to extract key themes and competencies. Finally, iterative feedback sessions with stakeholders were conducted to refine and validate the framework, ensuring it addresses the unique challenges and needs of under-represented entrepreneurs.



3 Core Competencies for Entrepreneurs



Core Competencies for Entrepreneurs

For core competencies for entrepreneurs at EU level, European Commission released in 2016 the **ENTRECOMP framework**, a comprehensive guideline designed to foster entrepreneurial skills across diverse populations. This framework emphasizes the critical role of entrepreneurship in driving economic growth, innovation, and social inclusion. It outlines essential competencies such as creativity, strategic thinking, risk management, and resilience, tailored to empower under-represented groups to overcome systemic barriers. ENTRECOMP seeks to equip entrepreneurs with necessary skills.

Innovation and Creativity

Innovation and creativity are fundamental competencies for entrepreneurs, enabling them to identify unique opportunities and develop novel solutions. Under-represented entrepreneurs leverage their diverse backgrounds to drive inclusive innovation, addressing specific market gaps and cultural nuances. This adaptability and inventive thinking are crucial for overcoming systemic barriers and enhancing competitiveness in various industries, as highlighted in the interviews.

Risk Management and Decision Making

Risk management and decision-making are critical competencies for entrepreneurs, especially under-represented ones facing systemic barriers. Effective strategies include thorough market research, strategic planning, and adaptability. Interviews across six countries highlight that successful entrepreneurs combine resilience with informed risk-taking, enabling them to navigate uncertainties and make strategic decisions that drive their ventures forward. These skills are vital for sustaining and growing their businesses.

Strategic Thinking and Planning

Strategic thinking and planning are essential for entrepreneurs to set long-term goals and navigate complex market environments. Under-represented entrepreneurs, as highlighted in the interviews, emphasize the importance of strategic foresight in overcoming barriers and leveraging opportunities. This competency involves analyzing **market trends**, setting clear objectives, and developing actionable plans to achieve sustainable business growth and success.

[5] Charles H. Matthews, Ralph Brueggemann, „Innovation and Entrepreneurship“ (2015), available at <https://api.taylorfrancis.com/content/books/mono/download?identifierName=doi&identifierValue=10.4324/9781315813622&type=googlepdf>



3.1 Specific competencies for securing funding



Specific competencies for securing funding



Under-represented startup founders are a largely untapped resource with significant potential to drive economic growth, foster innovation, and contribute to social progress. Despite their potential, entrepreneurs from under-represented backgrounds and migrants who are establishing and growing their own businesses face unique challenges that go beyond the typical risks encountered by other entrepreneurs.

In addition to the common entrepreneurial challenges like **securing funding**, navigating regulatory environments, and building market presence, under-represented founders must overcome cultural adaptation and linguistic barriers. Cultural adaptation is crucial because it influences how entrepreneurs engage with their markets, understand consumer behavior, and establish business relationships. Mastering local customs and business etiquette is essential for building trust and effectively marketing products and services. Proficiency in the local language is often necessary to comprehend legal documents, communicate with stakeholders, and navigate bureaucratic processes. Without adequate language skills, these entrepreneurs may find it difficult to access vital resources, participate in networking opportunities, and integrate fully into the local business community.

In this chapter, we will explore the specific challenges and opportunities for underrepresented founders in France, Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany, Romania, and Ireland. We will examine the unique barriers and systemic issues present in each country, highlighting the need for tailored support mechanisms. By understanding these country-specific challenges, we aim to develop more inclusive and adaptive entrepreneurship education frameworks that can unlock the full potential of under-represented entrepreneurs, contributing to broader **economic and social development**.

Specific competencies for securing funding

Linguistic Barriers

Linguistic proficiency is a critical competency for under-represented founders across the six countries, significantly impacting their ability to navigate business environments effectively.

In Germany, proficiency in German is crucial for understanding contracts, negotiating effectively, and interacting with government authorities, particularly when applying for public funding where English proficiency is often limited. Conversely, within the startup scene and venture capital funds, English is widely used, reducing language barriers.

In Denmark and the Netherlands, while many Danes and Dutch speak English, proficiency in the local language can greatly simplify dealings with local bureaucracy and improve networking and **communication with stakeholders**.

In France, linguistic and financial literacy are intertwined challenges; the highly regulated financial system, coupled with complex tax codes and specific business accounting rules, demands a good command of French. Moreover, the term "entrepreneur" can be confusing, as it refers both to individuals starting a business and to the juridical status of a sole trader, adding another layer of complexity.

Cultural Awareness

In many instances, success in entrepreneurship is not just about having a great product or service, but also about understanding the cultural context in which one operates. **Cultural awareness** is a fundamental competency for under-represented founders as it profoundly impacts their ability to understand and navigate the business milieu, the values driving funding programs, investor funding choices, and modes of consumption. Across the consortium, there are notable cultural differences shaping the business environment. Thus, while Irish entrepreneurship aims to overcome the insular nature of the national market by achieving competitiveness in exporting, in France, the importance of socio-cultural factors in consumer behavior necessitates a deep understanding of cultural nuances and regional preferences. French markets often have considerable local differences, making requiring a greater focus on tailoring one's products to consumer behaviors and preferences that vary greatly across regions.



Specific competencies for securing funding

Cultural Awareness

Cultural awareness includes understanding local business etiquette, norms, and values, which can help in building relationships and gaining trust among potential investors and partners. For instance, in the Netherlands, knowledge of Dutch cultural practices is essential for networking. Similarly, in Denmark, the business culture is characterized by collaboration, egalitarianism, transparency, and trust, with a focus on flat organizational structures. Entrepreneurs who are familiar with these cultural aspects are better positioned to integrate and thrive within the Danish business environment. **Cultural awareness** also influences how entrepreneurs present their businesses to funding programs and investors, who often have specific expectations and values that align with their cultural context. Thus, countries like Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and Denmark emphasize the need for sustainability and implementing green practices in their funding schemes. By appreciating and adapting to these diverse cultural landscapes, under-represented entrepreneurs can better position themselves for success in their respective markets.

Navigating bureaucracies

Navigating bureaucratic landscapes is a critical competency for under-represented founders, as they often encounter complex and highly regulated environments that can be daunting without the right knowledge and skills. Each country within the consortium presents unique challenges in this regard, requiring entrepreneurs to develop a nuanced understanding of local legal and regulatory frameworks.

In France, the financial system is known for its high level of regulation and bureaucratic complexity. Entrepreneurs must navigate specific rules related to business accounting, taxation, and financial reporting. The term “entrepreneur” in France can be particularly confusing, as it refers both to individuals starting their business and to the juridical status of a sole trader. This necessitates a clear understanding of the different business registration processes and industry-specific regulations to avoid legal pitfalls and ensure compliance.



Specific competencies for securing funding

Navigating bureaucracies

Germany's bureaucratic processes are equally stringent, with strict legal requirements that must be met. Entrepreneurs need to choose the correct legal structure for their businesses and thoroughly understand tax and regulatory obligations. Mastery of these areas is critical for success, as failing to comply with Germany's complex legal framework can result in significant setbacks.

In Denmark, understanding local tax laws, financial regulations, and available fiscal benefits is crucial. The Danish business environment values transparency and compliance, and entrepreneurs must be well-versed in the national tax system to leverage potential incentives effectively. Despite Denmark's collaborative and efficient bureaucracy, managing the necessary paperwork and adhering to compliance procedures remain essential tasks.

Romania presents its own set of challenges with national programs that are highly bureaucratic and involve extensive paperwork, even for minor acquisitions. Entrepreneurs must stay updated with frequent changes in national regulations that could impact project implementation and funding eligibility. Additionally, understanding and complying with anti-corruption laws and practices is vital to ensure transparency and integrity in the funding process.

The Netherlands, known for its efficient bureaucracy, still requires entrepreneurs to have a deep understanding of local business laws, labor regulations, and industry-specific compliance requirements. Familiarity with the Dutch tax regime, labor laws, and environmental regulations is crucial. Bureaucratic acumen, or the ability to navigate government procedures and manage compliance-related paperwork, is essential for entrepreneurs to successfully access and benefit from different funding programs.

Each country's unique bureaucratic environment underscores the importance of tailored knowledge and skills. Under-represented founders must equip themselves with the necessary competencies to navigate these regulatory landscapes effectively, ensuring their businesses can thrive within the local legal and financial frameworks.



Specific competencies for securing funding

Innovation Practices

Innovation is a critical competency for entrepreneurs, enabling them to develop unique products and services that address unmet needs **and drive business growth**. Within the consortium countries, the requirements for innovation are differently coded in national entrepreneurship funding programs and investor expectations, creating a diverse landscape for under-represented founders.

In Ireland, for instance, a business must demonstrate a strong capacity for innovation to secure funding. This includes developing unique products or services that provide additionality and avoid displacement. Irish founders require specific proof of innovative approaches in applications, such as adeptness at leveraging advanced technologies and a commitment to investing in research and development (R&D) to stay competitive. Clear, innovative strategies that meet market demands and fill existing gaps are essential for gaining financial support.

In the Netherlands, adaptability and innovation are crucial for entrepreneurial success. The Dutch funding environment emphasizes the ability to pivot and **adjust strategies** based on market changes and regulatory updates. This adaptability enhances business resilience, allowing it to thrive under evolving conditions. Dutch investors and funding programs often favor innovative solutions, particularly in sectors like technology, sustainability, and healthcare.

Denmark places a high value on research and innovation, with a focus on collaboration with universities and research institutions. Such partnerships can significantly enhance the credibility and innovative edge of entrepreneurial projects. Danish funding programs and investors look for entrepreneurs who engage in these collaborations to develop **cutting-edge solutions** and maintain a competitive advantage. This integration of academia and business fosters an environment where innovative ideas can thrive and be effectively brought to market.

By understanding and adapting to the specific innovation requirements and opportunities within each consortium country, under-represented founders can better position themselves for success.



Specific competencies for securing funding

Sustainability

Another key factor in aligning with national priorities and meeting investor expectations is understanding the requirements for **integrating sustainability** into business models, which vary across the consortium countries, despite a shared focus on green practices and contributing to the green transition.

In Ireland, entrepreneurs are expected to integrate sustainable practices into their business models from the outset, in order to align with initiatives like the Local Enterprise Office Green for Business and Enterprise Ireland Green Transition Fund. Demonstrating a strong commitment to sustainability, including clear plans and actions that support **eco-friendly** and socially responsible practices, is essential for securing funding and support from these programs.

Germany places a high value on **innovation and sustainability**. Entrepreneurs are encouraged to invest in research and development to promote eco-friendly business models. Sustainable practices are not only valued for their environmental benefits but also as a key criterion for gaining access to special funding and attracting investors. Businesses that can effectively combine innovation with sustainability are more likely to succeed in the German market.

In Romania, the incorporation of sustainability practices and adherence to ESG criteria have become increasingly important for entrepreneurs seeking to secure funding. Investors are progressively prioritizing businesses that demonstrate a commitment to sustainable development and responsible governance, recognizing that these practices are not only ethical imperatives but also indicators of **long-term viability** and risk management. For under-represented entrepreneurs, integrating ESG principles can enhance their appeal to a broader range of investors who are eager to support ventures that align with global sustainability goals. By adopting eco-friendly practices, fostering inclusive work environments, and ensuring transparent governance, these entrepreneurs can differentiate themselves in the market, attract impact investors, and participate in exclusive funding opportunities and startup programs that prioritize ESG compliance. This strategic focus on sustainability not only opens doors to essential financial support but also contributes to building a resilient and forward-thinking entrepreneurial ecosystem in Romania.



Specific competencies for securing funding

Sustainability

In the Netherlands, integrating sustainability and social responsibility into business models is crucial. The Dutch business environment strongly emphasizes Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria. Entrepreneurs should ensure their practices align with national sustainability priorities to appeal to investors who focus on ESG factors. Demonstrating a commitment to sustainable practices can significantly enhance a business's attractiveness and competitiveness in the Dutch market.

Denmark places a strong emphasis on **green technologies** and **sustainable business practices**. Entrepreneurs should be aware of and align their projects with the national sustainability priorities to attract funding. Understanding and integrating Danish sustainability practices into business operations is crucial for gaining support from funding programs and investors who prioritize eco-friendly and socially responsible initiatives.

By understanding and adapting to the specific sustainability requirements and expectations within each consortium country, under-represented founders can better position themselves for success. Whether integrating sustainable practices from the outset in Ireland, combining innovation with eco-friendly models in Germany, focusing on ESG criteria in the Netherlands, or aligning with green technologies in Denmark, a strong commitment to sustainability can help entrepreneurs secure funding and achieve long-term growth.



Specific competencies for securing funding

Financial acumen and financial literacy

Financial acumen and literacy are essential competencies for under-represented founders, enabling them to navigate the complex financial landscapes of their respective countries effectively. Each consortium country presents unique challenges and opportunities in terms of funding options, financial management, and regulatory requirements.

In France, entrepreneurs must develop a broad range of financial competencies, including business acumen, and investment-related knowledge. Building comprehensive business plans and understanding general investment principles are crucial for securing funding and managing business finances effectively.

In Ireland, strong financial literacy is a critical requirement for entrepreneurs seeking funding from Enterprise Ireland and Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs). Entrepreneurs need to demonstrate their ability to create detailed **financial plans**, manage budgets, and present clear **financial projections**, which is essential for gaining the trust of funders and potential investors. Irish funding bodies encourage the ability to strategize for global expansion and navigate export opportunities, as they prioritize an export focus, especially for enterprises that will employ more than 10 people.

Germany's financial landscape offers a variety of financing options, including traditional bank loans, government grants from institutions like KfW, and alternative sources such as **venture capital** and **crowdfunding**. Entrepreneurs must be well-versed in the requirements and benefits of each option to make informed decisions about their funding strategies. A deep understanding of the German financing ecosystem is crucial for accessing the necessary resources to support business growth and innovation.

Similarly, in the Netherlands, knowledge of the funding ecosystem and networks is vital. Entrepreneurs should be aware of various funding options, including government grants, subsidies, venture capital, angel investors, and EU funding opportunities. Understanding how to navigate these different sources of funding can significantly enhance an entrepreneur's ability to secure the necessary financial support for their business.



Specific competencies for securing funding

Financial acumen and financial literacy

Denmark emphasizes the importance of navigating public funding opportunities. Entrepreneurs should be familiar with sources like Innovation Fund Denmark and regional business development programs, which can provide significant financial support. Understanding the criteria and application processes for these funding sources is crucial for accessing financial resources that can drive **business growth and innovation**.

Romania presents unique challenges due to the **unpredictability** of funding programs. Entrepreneurs must demonstrate adaptability and resilience to navigate these uncertainties effectively. Additionally, awareness of regional disparities and development priorities within Romania is essential. Targeting funding opportunities that align with regional development strategies, particularly in less developed regions, can help entrepreneurs secure the support needed to build and grow their businesses.

By mastering these country-specific financial competencies, under-represented founders can better navigate the financial landscapes of their respective countries. This financial literacy enables them to make informed decisions, secure funding, and manage their resources effectively, ultimately contributing to the sustainability and success of their ventures.



Specific competencies for securing funding

Integrating in the local business support structures

Networking is a critical competency for under-represented founders, as it facilitates access to resources, support, and opportunities essential for business growth. Each consortium country has unique business cultures and ecosystems, which require adapting entrepreneurial teaching to the local context.

The French business environment relies heavily on personal relationships and trust, making it challenging for newcomers to establish themselves. Entrepreneurs need to access business communities and professional networks, which are pivotal for understanding consumer behavior and **building credibility**. Additionally, in France, effective networking includes an advocacy component intended to persuade more rigid funding bodies about the benefits of novel ways of doing things. Entrepreneurs and their peers are often expected to advocate for innovative business models and educate financial institutions about their potential.

In Ireland, networking is an integral part of the business culture. Entrepreneurs must build robust networks within Ireland's entrepreneurial ecosystem, actively participating in business networks, **incubators**, and **accelerators**. This active engagement helps entrepreneurs gain support, resources, and **mentorship**, which are crucial for their business development.

Germany places significant importance on building and maintaining **professional networks**. Entrepreneurs should regularly attend trade fairs, conferences, and join industry associations to establish important contacts and foster relationships with potential investors and partners. These events are vital for staying informed about industry trends, finding opportunities for collaboration, and accessing investment.

In the Netherlands, networking within entrepreneurial and funding communities is essential for **unlocking opportunities**. Entrepreneurs are encouraged to participate in local business events, join incubators, and engage with industry associations. These activities not only open doors to funding and partnerships but also help entrepreneurs integrate into the Dutch business ecosystem, which values collaboration and innovation.



Specific competencies for securing funding

Integrating in the local business support structures

Networking is crucial for under-represented entrepreneurs in Romania, as it serves as a gateway to securing vital funding and accessing startup programs. For many entrepreneurs from marginalized communities, traditional avenues of capital and support are often less accessible due to systemic biases and limited connections within established business circles. By engaging in robust networking, these entrepreneurs can build relationships with potential investors, mentors, and peers who can offer not only **financial backing** but also strategic advice and **mentorship**. Networking events, incubators, and accelerators provide platforms for showcasing innovative ideas and gaining visibility in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Through these connections, under-represented entrepreneurs can bridge the gap to critical resources, driving their ventures toward growth and sustainability in a competitive market.



Specific competencies for securing funding

Denmark emphasizes integration into local networks and industry-specific clusters. The country has several established clusters in sectors like biotechnology and clean technology, which provide valuable support and increase visibility to potential investors. Being active in these networks can significantly enhance an entrepreneur's **credibility** and access to resources. Danish business clusters are designed to foster collaboration, innovation, and growth, making them a crucial part of the entrepreneurial landscape.

By understanding and leveraging the networking dynamics in each consortium country, under-represented founders can better position themselves for success. Effective networking helps these entrepreneurs build the relationships and support systems needed to navigate their respective business environments, **access funding, and grow their ventures.**



3.2 Personal Competencies



Personal Competencies

Resilience and Adaptability

Resilience and adaptability are crucial for under-represented entrepreneurs who often face **systemic biases** and unique challenges. Entrepreneurs demonstrate remarkable resilience in overcoming obstacles such as financial constraints, cultural barriers, and limited networks. Adaptability allows them to switch their strategies in response to **changing market conditions** and unexpected setbacks. This competency is vital for sustaining their ventures, as it fosters innovation, continuous learning, and the ability to capitalize on new opportunities despite adverse circumstances.

Leadership and Motivation

Leadership and motivation are essential competencies for under-represented entrepreneurs, enabling them to inspire and guide their teams through challenges. **Effective leadership** involves clear communication, the ability to build trust, and is aiming to a shared vision. **Motivation** drives entrepreneurs to persist despite systemic barriers, maintain their commitment to their goals, and influence positive change within their communities. This dual competency is critical for creating inclusive work environments, encouraging innovation, and achieving long-term business success.

Communication and Negotiation

Communication and negotiation are vital for under-represented entrepreneurs to effectively convey their ideas, build relationships, and secure resources. Culturally nuanced communication in overcoming language barriers and **establishing credibility**. Strong negotiation skills enable these entrepreneurs to navigate funding challenges, form strategic partnerships, and advocate for their businesses. Mastery of these competencies facilitates better networking, resource acquisition, and conflict resolution, ultimately contributing to the sustainability and growth of their ventures.



3.3 Interpersonal Competencies





Networking and Relation Building

Networking and relationship building are essential competencies for under-represented entrepreneurs to overcome systemic barriers and access vital resources, being the most resourceful **interpersonal competency**. The research reveals that these entrepreneurs often face challenges in gaining initial support and credibility. Effective networking allows them to connect with mentors, investors, and industry experts, providing critical guidance and opportunities that might otherwise be inaccessible.

Interviews highlight the strategic use of personal and professional networks to build a stronger support system. Entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds leverage their unique cultural insights to create **niche markets** and tailored solutions, fostering inclusivity within their business practices. By engaging in continuous networking, they can stay informed about industry trends, share best practices, and collaborate on innovative projects.

Relationship building is equally important in establishing trust and long-term partnerships. The under-represented entrepreneurs emphasize the need for genuine connections based on **mutual respect and shared goals**. These relationships can lead to strategic alliances, joint ventures, and other collaborative efforts that enhance business growth and resilience.

Moreover, tailored support programs, such as **workshops** and networking events specifically designed for minority entrepreneurs, play a crucial role. These initiatives provide platforms for under-represented entrepreneurs to showcase their ideas, gain visibility, and build essential connections within the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Overall, networking and relationship building enable under-represented entrepreneurs to integrate into broader entrepreneurial networks, enhancing their ability to innovate, scale their businesses, and achieve long-term success.



3.4 Business Management Competencies



Business Management Competencies

Financial literacy and management

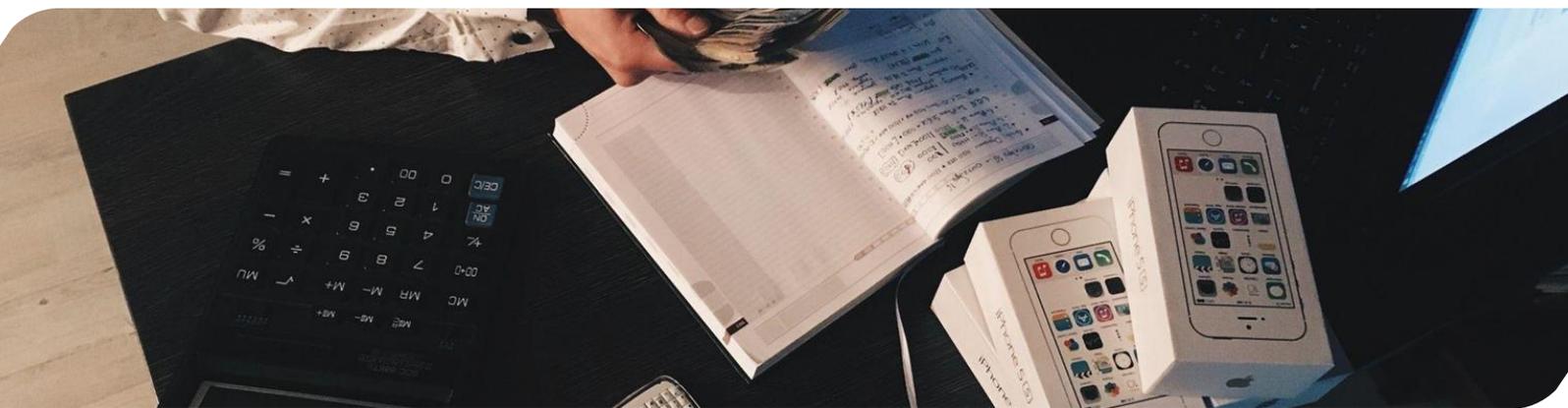
Financial literacy and management are critical competencies for under-represented entrepreneurs, enabling them to effectively **navigate financial challenges** and sustain their businesses. The research highlights the significant barriers these entrepreneurs face, including limited access to traditional funding sources and financial networks. Effective financial management involves understanding financial statements, budgeting, and securing funding. Interviews underscore the importance of financial literacy in empowering entrepreneurs to make informed decisions, attract investors, and achieve financial stability. Tailored support programs, such as workshops on **financial management**, play a vital role in equipping under-represented entrepreneurs with the necessary skills to succeed.

Marketing and Customer Relations

Marketing and customer relations are crucial competencies for under-represented entrepreneurs, enabling them to effectively **promote their businesses** and build lasting customer relationships. Based on their answers these entrepreneurs often employ innovative marketing strategies to reach niche markets and leverage digital platforms for greater visibility. Effective customer relations are emphasized as essential for establishing trust and loyalty, which are vital for business growth. Tailored marketing approaches, considering cultural nuances and unique market needs, help in overcoming barriers and fostering inclusive business practices. These skills are critical for attracting and retaining customers, ultimately contributing to the sustainability and success of their ventures.

Operations and Project Management

Operations and project management are critical for the efficiency and scalability of entrepreneurial ventures. The interviews reveal the necessity for under-represented entrepreneurs to develop strong **operational strategies** and **project management skills**. Effective operations management involves streamlining processes, optimizing resource use, and ensuring consistent quality. Project management competencies enable entrepreneurs to plan, execute, and oversee projects effectively, ensuring timely completion and adaptability to changes. These skills are crucial for maintaining operational efficiency, managing growth, and overcoming logistical challenges, ultimately contributing to the sustainability and success of their businesses. Tailored training programs and support networks are essential in equipping these entrepreneurs with the necessary tools to excel in these areas.



3.5 Sector-Specific Competencies



Sector-Specific Competencies

Understanding Sector Dynamics

Understanding sector dynamics is crucial for entrepreneurs to identify opportunities and navigate industry-specific challenges. It involves analyzing market trends, competitive landscapes, and regulatory environments. The under-represented entrepreneurs who grasp these dynamics can better tailor their strategies to meet market demands and overcome barriers. As Porter (1985) emphasizes, **"Competitive strategy is about being different. It means deliberately choosing a different set of activities to deliver a unique mix of value."** This competency enables entrepreneurs to innovate, adapt, and thrive within their sectors, ensuring long-term business success and resilience.

Technological Competence

Technological competence is essential for modern entrepreneurs, enabling them to leverage digital tools and platforms to enhance their business operations. The entrepreneurs emphasize the importance of digital literacy in marketing, customer engagement, and operational efficiency for under-represented entrepreneurs. Mastery of technology aids in overcoming resource limitations and accessing broader markets. As Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014) note, **"The key to winning the race is not to compete against machines but to compete with machines."** This competence ensures that entrepreneurs remain competitive and innovative in an increasingly digital economy.

[6] Porter, Michael E. *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance*. New York: Free Press, 1985

[7] Brynjolfsson, Erik and Andrew McAfee. *The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress, and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant*

Technologies. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014. .

4 Entrepreneurial Support Systems



Entrepreneurial Support Systems



Importance of Mentorship and Advisory Services

Mentorship and advisory services are vital for the growth and success of under-represented entrepreneurs. Across the interviews the entrepreneurs mention how mentors provide crucial guidance, industry insights, and emotional support, helping entrepreneurs navigate challenges and **seize opportunities**. Advisory services offer expert advice on strategic planning, financial management, and market positioning. These resources help bridge knowledge gaps, confidence, and expand professional networks. Effective mentorship and advisory support foster resilience and innovation, enabling entrepreneurs to make informed decisions and achieve long-term sustainability in their ventures.

Role of Incubators and Accelerators

Incubators and accelerators play a crucial role in the development and success of under-represented entrepreneurs. These programs, such as SINGA in France, provide essential resources, including mentorship, networking opportunities, and access to funding. Entrepreneurs mention how such support helps entrepreneurs overcome initial barriers, **refine their business models**, and **scale their ventures**. Incubators and accelerators offer tailored training and workshops, fostering innovation and resilience. By connecting entrepreneurs with industry experts and potential investors, these programs significantly enhance the chances of business success and contribute to a more inclusive and dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem.



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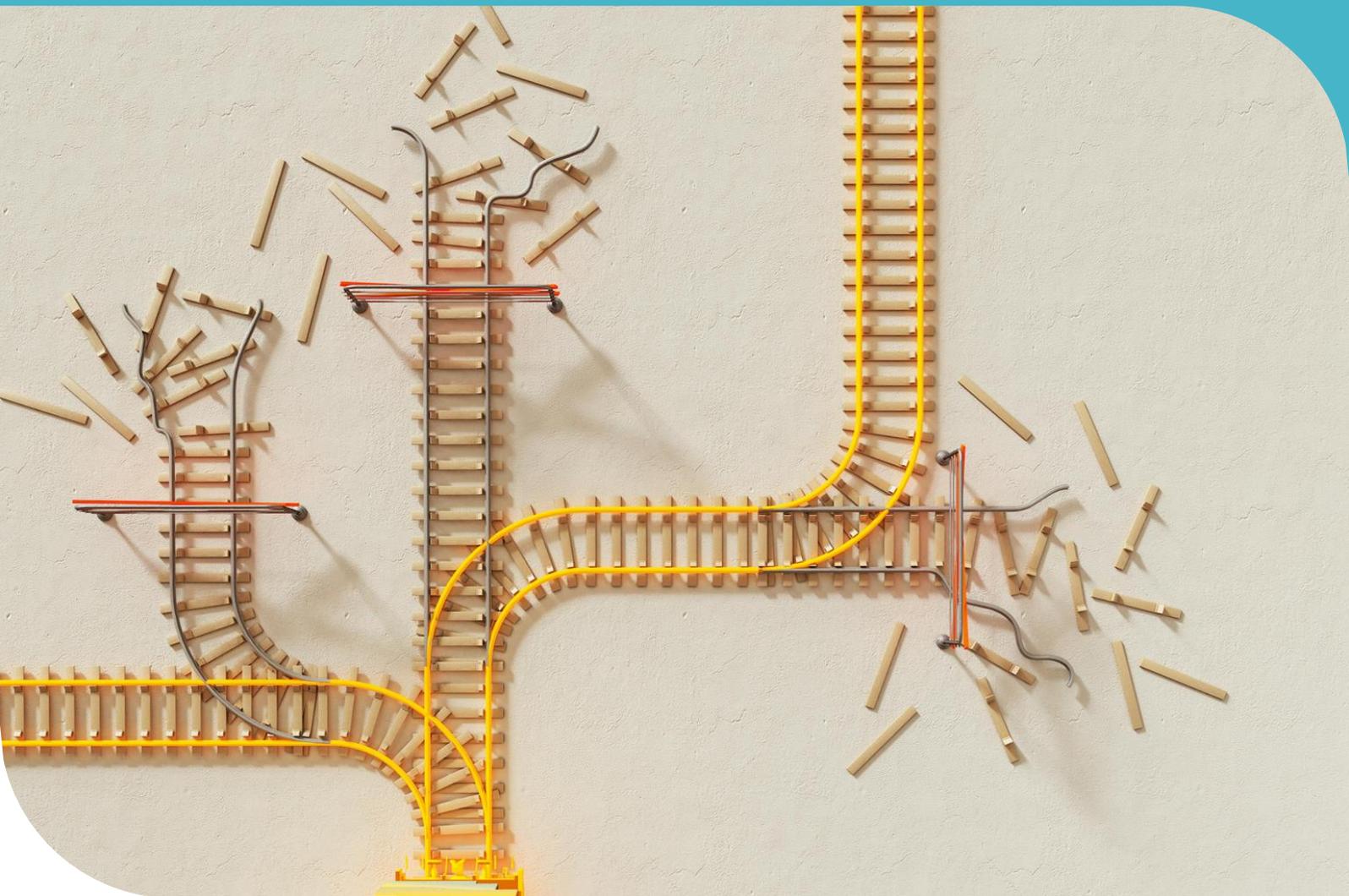
Overcoming Systemic Barriers and Biases



Barriers and Biases

Overcoming systemic barriers and biases is crucial for the success of under-represented entrepreneurs. The research reveals that these entrepreneurs face significant challenges, including limited access to funding, networks, and market opportunities due to entrenched biases.

Addressing these barriers fosters a more inclusive entrepreneurial system, enabling diverse talents to thrive. By implementing equitable policies, providing targeted support, and **raising awareness** about **systemic inequities**, it can be created a level playing field. This not only benefits individual entrepreneurs but also drives innovation, economic growth, and social equity, enriching the broader business landscape with diverse perspectives and solutions.



6

Competence Assessment and Development



Competence Assessment and Development

Tools for Self-Assessment

Tools for self-assessment are vital for entrepreneurs to identify their strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. The value of these tools in helping underrepresented entrepreneurs develop self-awareness and **strategic insights**. By using self-assessment tools, entrepreneurs can better understand their competencies, set realistic goals, and track their progress.

This process fosters continuous learning and personal growth, enabling them to adapt to market demands and overcome challenges. Effective self-assessment contributes to more **informed decision-making** and enhances overall business performance, providing a solid foundation for sustainable entrepreneurial success.

There are various digital tools that can be used for evaluating key entrepreneurial traits and skills. The benefits of this tools are that they are providing a detailed analysis of strength and propose different areas for development specific to entrepreneurship. For example, can be find online a website called Entrepreneur Mindset Profile that throughout different process of testing can generate an individual report based on the answers.

Continuous Learning and Development

Continuous learning and development are crucial for the sustained success of underrepresented entrepreneurs. Across the six countries the entrepreneurs mentioned that **ongoing education** helps entrepreneurs adapt to changing market conditions, innovate, and remain **competitive**.

By engaging in lifelong learning, entrepreneurs can acquire new skills, stay updated with industry trends, and implement best practices. This commitment to personal and professional growth fosters resilience and strategic thinking, enabling entrepreneurs to overcome challenges and seize opportunities. Continuous learning not only enhances individual capabilities but also contributes to the overall dynamism and inclusivity of the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Funding

Funding is a cornerstone of entrepreneurial success, especially for under-represented groups. Access to capital allows entrepreneurs to invest in essential resources, scale their businesses, and navigate financial challenges. The European Union supports various funding initiatives aimed at fostering inclusive entrepreneurship. For example, the European Social Fund (ESF) provides financial assistance to projects promoting social inclusion and employment opportunities. Another initiative, the European Investment Fund (EIF), offers funding through venture capital and microfinance to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). These funding sources **empower entrepreneurs** to overcome barriers, drive innovation, and contribute to economic growth. Access to diverse funding options not only sustains businesses but also promotes a dynamic and inclusive economic environment across the EU.

Guidelines, strategies and tools

Guidelines, strategies, and tools are vital for enhancing the competencies of under-represented entrepreneurs, enabling them to adapt, innovate, and thrive in diverse market conditions. At the EU level, frameworks such as the European Commission's "Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan" provide strategic guidelines that foster an entrepreneurial culture and support **access to funding, education, and training**.

Tools like the Enterprise Europe Network offer resources and advisory services to help entrepreneurs navigate regulatory landscapes and expand into new markets. Moreover, initiatives like the EU Start-Up and Scale-Up initiative provide a comprehensive set of strategies, including networking opportunities, **mentorship programs**, and access to innovation hubs. These resources collectively empower entrepreneurs to develop **resilience**, strategic thinking, and **cultural sensitivity**, ensuring they can overcome systemic barriers and contribute to a dynamic, inclusive economy. For instance, the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs program facilitates cross-border exchange, allowing new entrepreneurs to learn from experienced counterparts in other EU countries, thus fostering adaptability and long-term business success.

Policy advocacy

Policy advocacy is crucial for creating a supportive environment for under-represented entrepreneurs, enabling systemic change and equitable access to resources. At the EU level, advocacy efforts can influence policies that reduce barriers and **foster inclusivity**. For example, the EU's Small Business Act (SBA) includes principles that advocate for fair competition and simplified regulations for SMEs. The European Commission's Start-up and Scale-up Initiative; addresses policy challenges and supports entrepreneurship through improved regulatory frameworks. Additionally, programs like Horizon Europe provide funding for research and innovation, supporting policies that drive sustainable economic growth and **social equity**. Effective policy advocacy ensures that the unique needs of under-represented entrepreneurs are recognized and addressed, promoting a more inclusive and dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem.

7

Implementing the Competence Framework



Implementing the Competence Framework

Integration into Entrepreneurial Training Programs

Integrating a competence framework into entrepreneurial training programs is crucial for nurturing a new generation of under-represented entrepreneurs. This integration ensures that the essential skills and knowledge identified in the framework are systematically imparted through **tailored education**.

Programs should focus on innovation, strategic thinking, and resilience, aligning with the framework's emphasis on overcoming systemic barriers. By collaborating with educational institutions, training programs can incorporate these competencies into their curriculum, providing hands-on experiences and mentorship opportunities. Such integration not only enhances individual entrepreneurial journeys but also fosters a more inclusive business environment, driving societal change and economic growth through diverse entrepreneurial success.

Collaboration with Educational Institutions

Collaboration with educational institutions plays a key role in the effective implementation of the competence framework. By integrating the framework into academia, these institutions can offer specialized courses that focus on key entrepreneurial skills such as **risk management, strategic planning and financial literacy**.

These partnerships enable a seamless transition from theoretical knowledge to practical application, where students can engage in real-world projects and business simulations. In addition, educational institutions can leverage their research capabilities to continuously refine and adapt the framework, ensuring that it remains relevant to evolving market conditions. Such collaborations also improve access to a diverse group of mentors and industry experts, enriching the learning experience and providing valuable networking opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs. Ultimately, this partnership fosters a system where innovation thrives, and under-represented entrepreneurs are equipped with the tools and confidence to succeed.



8

Impact of Competence Framework on Entrepreneurial Success



Impact of Competence Framework Entrepreneurial Success

Measuring Outcomes

Outcome measurement is essential to assess the impact of the skills framework on entrepreneurial success. This involves tracking quantitative metrics such as revenue growth, **market expansion** and funding raised, which provide concrete evidence of business performance. In addition, the evaluation of entrepreneurial skills improvement is crucial.

For example, assessing progress in strategic thinking, financial knowledge and risk management skills can be done through **pre- and post-training assessments**, self-assessment surveys and performance in simulated business scenarios. Qualitative measures, such as feedback from entrepreneurs and case studies, also provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the framework in addressing systemic barriers and encouraging resilience. Regular analysis of these results enables continuous improvement of the framework, ensuring that it adapts to the evolving needs of under-represented entrepreneurs.

This comprehensive approach to measuring both business performance and skills development contributes to a more inclusive and dynamic entrepreneurial environment.

Future Prospects

The future prospects for the Competence Framework are promising, with several key areas of focus aimed at enhancing its impact. One primary prospect is the continuous integration of the framework into **entrepreneurial training programs**. This involves creating a comprehensive curriculum specially designed for under-represented entrepreneurs that will incorporate essential training. By doing so, future entrepreneurs will be better equipped to navigate systemic barriers and achieve success.

Additionally, ongoing measurement of outcomes through quantitative and qualitative metrics will ensure the framework's effectiveness and adaptability to evolving needs. This approach will help track progress, **refine strategies**, and maintain the relevance of the framework.

Furthermore, fostering partnerships with incubators, accelerators, and mentorship programs will provide vital support and resources to under-represented entrepreneurs, enhancing their chances of success. These future initiatives will collectively contribute to a more inclusive and dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem, driving economic growth and social equity.



9

Conclusions



Conclusion

Summary of Key Points

The Competence Framework aims to empower under-represented entrepreneurs in six countries by fostering essential skills and knowledge for success. It bridges support gaps, emphasizing **innovation, strategic thinking, resilience, tailored education, mentoring, and financial literacy**. The framework is based on extensive research and interviews, capturing experiences and strategies for successful businesses. Core competencies include innovation, risk management, strategic planning, resilience, leadership, communication, networking, financial literacy, marketing, operations, sector-specific knowledge, and technological competence.

Implementing the framework involves integration into training programs, collaboration with educational institutions, and continuous learning, fostering a more inclusive and dynamic entrepreneurial environment.

Recommendations for Future Research and Implementation

Based on the interviews across the six countries the following recommendations for future research can provide deeper insights and more support for under-presented entrepreneurs enhancing the Competence Framework effectiveness and fostering a more inclusive entrepreneurial system.

Longitudinal Studies: Conduct longitudinal studies to track the long-term impact of the Competence Framework on entrepreneurial success among under-represented groups. This can provide insights into the sustained benefits and areas for improvement over time.

Sector-Specific Analysis: Investigate the application of the Competence Framework within specific industries to identify sector-specific competencies and support needs. This can help tailor the framework to various business sectors more effectively.

Digital Tools and Platforms: Develop and assess digital tools and platforms for self-assessment and continuous learning tailored to under-represented entrepreneurs. These tools can provide accessible resources and personalized development plans.

Mentorship Models: Explore different models of mentorship and advisory services to determine the most effective approaches. Research can focus on the structure, frequency, and content of mentorship interactions that yield the best outcomes.



Conclusion

Impact of Incubators and Accelerators: Evaluate the role and effectiveness of incubators and accelerators in supporting underrepresented entrepreneurs. This can include the types of resources and training that are most beneficial and how these programs can be improved.

Policy Interventions: Investigate the impact of policy interventions aimed at reducing systemic barriers and biases. This research can inform the development of policies that better support under-represented entrepreneurs.

Networking Strategies: Examine effective networking strategies that under-represented entrepreneurs use to build relationships and access resources. Identifying best practices can enhance support programs and networking opportunities.



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