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17 Entrepreneurial Support for Migrant Entrepreneurs: A Systematization of a Growing Stream of Literature

This is the final peer-reviewed author's accepted manuscript (postprint) of the following publication:

*Published Version:*

Serpente, G., Martinelli, G., Bolzani, D. (2024). 17 Entrepreneurial Support for Migrant Entrepreneurs: A Systematization of a Growing Stream of Literature. Berlino : De Gruyter [10.1515/9783111025520-017].

*Availability:*

This version is available at: <https://hdl.handle.net/11585/969670> since: 2025-11-09

*Published:*

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.1515/9783111025520-017>

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# Entrepreneurial Support for Migrant Entrepreneurs: A Systematization of a Growing Stream of Literature

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To be cited as: Serpente, G., Martinelli, G., & Bolzani, D. (2024). Entrepreneurial support for migrant entrepreneurs: A systematization of a growing stream of literature. Accepted in B. Glinka and J. Freiling (Eds.), *Handbook of Migrant Entrepreneurship*. Berlin: De Gruyter. ISBN 978-3-11-102530-8. ISSN 2748-016X (in press).

## Abstract

Over the last decades, several initiatives have been launched to support migrants engaging in entrepreneurial activities, spanning public and private actors, and covering a variety of services targeted to different ventures and groups of migrants. The literature has growingly paid attention to such available entrepreneurial support, which goes beyond traditional help from migrants' kinship and co-ethnic networks and communities. This chapter will provide an overview of current knowledge on such entrepreneurial support for migrant entrepreneurs. By conducting a systematic literature review of 69 peer-reviewed articles, we combine emerging themes and identify theoretical and empirical gaps forming a future research agenda. The results of this research provide several insights that contribute to the flow of literature on entrepreneurial support for migrant entrepreneurs, along with policy and practice recommendations.

**Keywords:** systematic literature review, migrant entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial support, policies

**Indexed words:** systematic literature review; support by government; environmental support; entrepreneurial programs; incubators and accelerators; civil society organizations; social economy; social networks; financiers and investors.

## 1. Introduction

Entrepreneurial support initiatives provided to migrant entrepreneurs are on the rise (Berntsen et al., 2022). We follow Ratinho et al. (2020, p. 2) in defining entrepreneurial support as the “provision of valuable resources to entrepreneurs by individuals or organizations, which carry structured activities to facilitate the imminent establishment of a new independent firm, increase survival chances, or promote long-term growth.” These initiatives are gaining increasing scholarly attention as they are seen as tools to nurture entrepreneurial knowledge in individuals (Bhagat & Roderick, 2020) while supporting them on the path to new business creation (Crea et al., 2017). Support initiatives for migrants, similar to the ones tracked in broader entrepreneurship literature (e.g., Ratinho et al., 2020; Bergman & McMullen, 2022), intervene in the conception and idea development phase of the business idea (Crea et al., 2017), and offer different types of support theoretical and practical support, such as coaching (Harima et al., 2019), counseling, and financial assistance (Birdthistle, 2019).

Recently, such entrepreneurship support initiatives have taken various forms, thanks to the growing impulse of private and public actors, such as government (Birdthistle, 2019) and non-governmental organizations, including civil society and social economy organizations (Bernsten et al., 2022; Nijhoff, 2021). On the one hand, the increasing facilitation of entrepreneurial careers for migrants is linked to their otherwise poor paid labor market outcomes and the tentative to support them in reaching economic integration and decent living standard in the host country (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Berntsen et al., 2022). On the other hand, some entrepreneurial support initiatives have been developed to attract talented entrepreneurs with innovative and impactful ideas, potentially benefitting the host country (e.g., De Lange, 2018; Patuzzi, 2019).

In general, entrepreneurial support initiatives specifically focused on migrant entrepreneurs are justified by the more significant restraints and challenges they approach in the host country's business sector (European Commission, 2016; Solano, 2023). Besides the bureaucratic difficulties and entry barriers in the market sector of interest, they are endowed with the liability of foreignness and outsidersness (e.g., Verduijn & Essers, 2013; Gurău et al., 2020), so they might face language barriers, cultural and social differences, and structural inequalities. Therefore, specific entrepreneurial support policies and programs aim to close this gap and encourage migrants' business ideas conception, development, and growth.

The related academic literature has acknowledged the relevance of this phenomenon and flourished, resulting in a fragmented field in need of systematization. This study, therefore, reviews 69 published peer-reviewed international articles to address the following research question: *What is the landscape of entrepreneurial supports available to migrant entrepreneurs?* By bringing together and synthesizing knowledge on external entrepreneurial support for migrant entrepreneurs, this work provides important insights that contribute to the literature about migrant entrepreneurship and about entrepreneurial support initiatives and organizations, along with policy and practice recommendations. The chapter is structured as follows: Firstly, it provides an overview of the research methodology, describing the data collection process and analysis. Subsequently, the chapter presents an overview of the reviewed articles and a comprehensive review of the findings, followed by a discussion of key learning points and future research directions.

## **2. Methodology**

### ***2.1 Data collection***

Our systematic literature review can be described as a structured theme-based review (Paul et al., 2021), and followed several stages for identifying, assembling, organizing, cleaning, synthesizing, and reporting literature insights based on available methodological

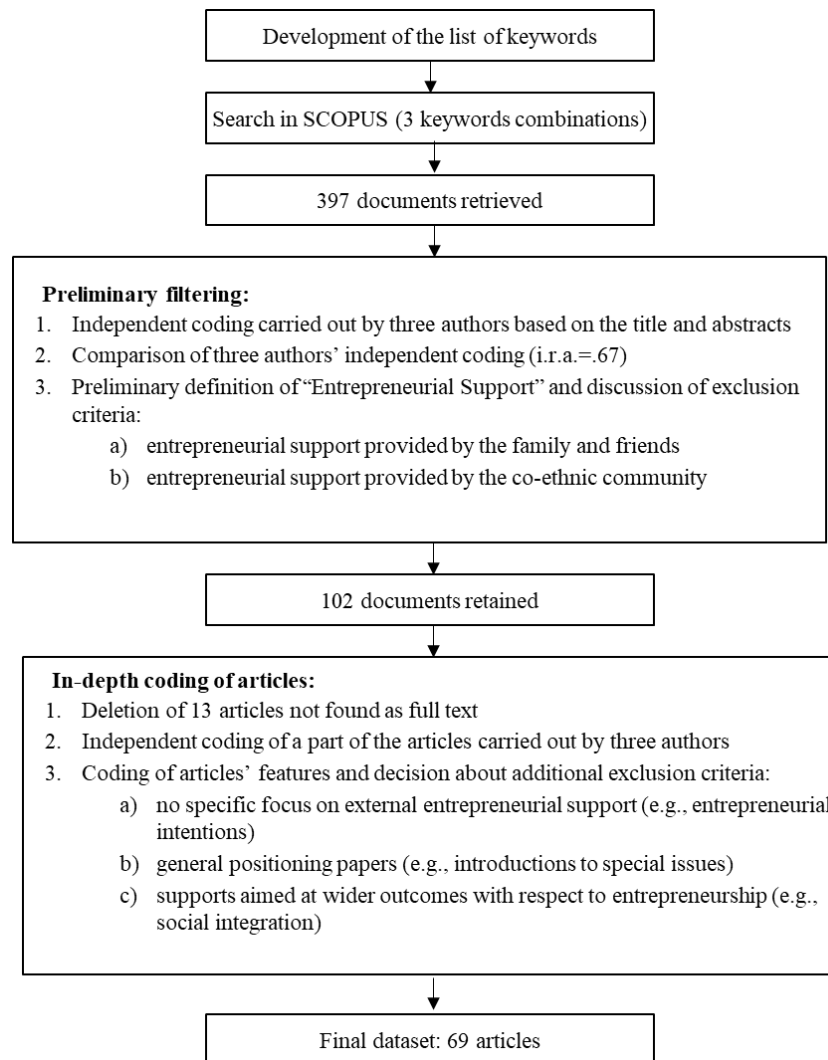
recommendations (e.g., Moher et al., 2015; Paul et al., 2021). The search was carried out in July 2022 on Scopus<sup>1</sup>, combining the following three sets of keywords in the title, abstract, and keywords of documents: (1) entrepreneurial activities (entrepr\*/enterpr\*/business\*); (2) entrepreneurial subjects (refugee\*/“asylum seeker”\*/foreign\*/migrant\*/immigrant\*); and (3) entrepreneurial support (support/incubat\*/accelerat\*). The search was then narrowed to journal articles written in English. The results of different searches were merged, eliminating redundant documents, resulting in a sample of 397 articles.

A two-step cleaning of the retrieved articles was organized to ensure that their content was in line with the core of the research interests of the chapter. In the first step, the titles and abstracts of the articles were read, coding documents for inclusion or exclusion. In this first phase of coding, the inter-rater agreement was close to 67% for two main reasons: (a) the inclusion/exclusion of 47 papers (12% of the total) was uncertain based only on the abstract and title; (b) the retrieved papers adopted a variety of definitions and operationalizations of entrepreneurial support and migrant entrepreneurs; and (c) entrepreneurial support was not one of the key variables studied by the paper, even if it was mentioned in the abstract. Any disagreement was resolved by including the articles which were difficult to classify (cases (a) above), discussing which definitions and operationalizations of entrepreneurial support to adopt, and excluding the articles where entrepreneurial support was just mentioned but not core to the research (e.g., Baycan-Levent & Kundak, 2009)<sup>2</sup>. In particular, articles dealing with entrepreneurial support provided by family and friends (e.g., Almohaddam et al., 2021) or by the co-ethnic community (e.g., Apa et al., 2020) were excluded, since these are not part of the external support that the chapter would like to revise here. At the end of this first coding phase, 102 articles were retained as potentially relevant to our study.

In the second coding phase, the articles for which it was impossible to find the full text online, by contacting the authors, or in any available repositories at our institution ( $n =$

13) were excluded. Each author separately read a part of the articles, coding the following fields for each document: aim; definition of entrepreneurial support; definition of migrant; research question; theory; method (including sample size, industry, migrants' country of origin, and country of residence); hypotheses; dependent, independent, and moderating/mediating variables; key findings; and contributions/implications. Based on this work, the team of authors organized a meeting to discuss whether each paper should be included/excluded and ensure consistent coding practices across the team. As a result of this second step, other articles were further excluded: (1) articles not explicitly focused on external entrepreneurial support (e.g., about family support, De Luca & Ambrosini, 2019; entrepreneurial intentions, Khaw et al., 2021; relationships with suppliers, Zolfagharian & Iyer, 2020); (2) general positioning papers, such as introductions to special issues (e.g., Gibbs et al., 2018); (3) supports aimed at broader outcomes than entrepreneurship (e.g., social integration, Goodkind, 2005; employment, Loosemore et al., 2020). At the end of this process, 69 articles were retained. The data collection process is summarized in Figure 1.

**Figure 1 – The process of data collection**



Source: Authors' own elaboration

The starting point to analyze the papers was the categorization of the types of business support defined by Ratinho et al. (2020), which included government, environment, entrepreneurship centers and programs, business incubators, investors and financiers (venture capitalists and business angels), universities, and science parks. However, after a first round of coding, some important differences in the types of business support examined in the reviewed papers appeared. This categorization was thus extended to include the following types of business support for migrants: government, environment, entrepreneurship centers and programs, investors and financiers, universities, science parks, civil society and social economy organizations, and social networks outside family and friends<sup>3</sup>. The analysis

provides an in-depth summary of the papers for each type of entrepreneurial support for migrants, providing a detailed summary of each document, identifying the findings, limitations, and future research directions.

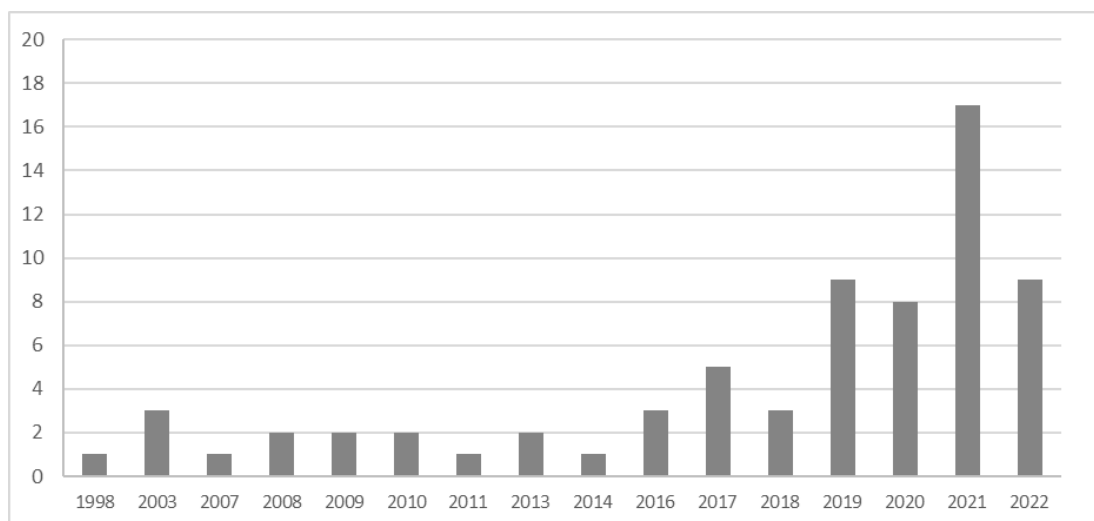
During the review, it became evident that studying the domain of entrepreneurial support for migrants entails considering not only different categories of support but also different categories of entrepreneurs. First, there is an issue about the context where support and migrants are embedded: the analysis, therefore, framed the available literature by looking at the host country and home country of migrants studied in the selected papers, adopting the United Nations geographical regions for statistical analyses (1999). Second, migrant entrepreneurs are a super-diverse population (Ram et al., 2017) and are likely to need, search for, and receive different entrepreneurial support. Consequently, it seemed important to disentangle the definition of migrant entrepreneurs provided by each paper and the categories of beneficiaries of entrepreneurial support discussed in the papers.

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1 Description of the sampled papers

The articles included in the study were published in 1998-2022, with a substantial increase beginning in 2019 (Figure 2).

**Figure 2 – Number of published papers per year**



Source: Authors' own elaboration

The literature in this field is fragmented, appearing in 43 journals. Around 50% of articles were published in 11 outlets (Table 1): mainly entrepreneurship and small business journals, but also connected to regional studies and demography (for full detail of publication outlets, see Table A1).

**Table 1 – Top ten outlets of sampled articles**

Source Title	N. articles	% on total
International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research	7	10%
Journal of Enterprising Communities	6	9%
International Migration	4	6%
Sustainability (Switzerland)	4	6%
Entrepreneurship and Regional Development	3	4%
Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship	3	4%
Academy of Entrepreneurship Journal	2	3%
Contemporary Issues in Entrepreneurship Research	2	3%
Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development	2	3%
Annals of Anthropological Practice	1	1%
Asian Population Studies	1	1%

Source: Authors' own elaboration

The chapter examined the contents of all the documents. Eight articles (12%) were theoretical/conceptual, among which two papers offered a literature review. The majority of papers (88%) were empirical, either using qualitative (69%), quantitative (20%), or mixed methods (11%).

From a theoretical standpoint, most papers in the sample (64%) did not directly describe using a specific theory. For those who adopt some theoretical perspective, the most used framework is the mixed embeddedness framework (Kloosterman, 2010) (17%), also in conjunction with other perspectives such as super-diversity (Vertovec, 2007) or welfare regimes (Leung, 2003). In addition, 9% of papers used theories belonging to the cultural or sociological tradition in immigrant entrepreneurship studies, such as middleman minority, ethnic resources (Light & Bonacich, 1988), ethnic enclave (Waldinger, 1993), or transnationalism (Rehan et al., 2019) theories. Around 4% of the papers draw on

psychological or educational perspectives, such as the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), self-categorization theory (Rashid & Cepeda-García, 2021), and self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, 1989). Just 3% of papers are based on institutional theories, such as location theory (North, 1955) or discursive institutionalism (Schmidt, 2008).

### ***3.2 Analysis of the sampled papers***

**3.2.1 Entrepreneurial support by the government.** The boundaries of governments' role in migrant entrepreneurship are often fuzzy, often producing some voids that deter migrants from starting a business in the host country. While the reviewed papers often do not explicitly mention the government as the provider of many entrepreneurial support factors, it is possible to identify them as the variety of public policies, the welfare state, and the physical, commercial, and legal infrastructures that might have a role in promoting, encouraging and supporting business creation and growth among migrants.

Ozasir-Kacar & Essers (2023, p. 108) give a comprehensive definition, which can represent a good starting point for the analysis. In their words, government support is “the regulatory environment consisting of the sets of rules, regulations, practices, taxes, programs, policy interventions and initiatives from governmental and non-governmental actors. [...] Entrepreneurship policies are formed based on certain assumptions informed by discourses on gender, ethnicity and entrepreneurship”. This characterization underlines two recurring aspects in the literature: the role of public actors and the existing narratives about entrepreneurship and individual migrants.

Scholars agree that migrant entrepreneurship is a relevant form of integration in the country of destination: as a viable path of decent and sustainable employment; and as a driver of economic growth, job creation, and technological advances in the country of destination (Yu et al., 2021; Simarasl et al., 2021). Setting up a business is not straightforward, in any case. When asked about their entrepreneurial intentions and the choice for locating the

enterprise, to-be migrant entrepreneurs consider government support, access to financial resources, educational programs, and existing network support, which increase the likelihood of starting a business. Nevertheless, personal attitude, individual background, gender, and education appear to be the decisive factors. Migrants are a heterogeneous group but are often treated as homogeneous, especially by governmental policies (Solano, 2023). This approach often leads to a lack of institutional opportunities and policy support that hinders the establishment of entrepreneurial projects. A mismatch between what governments intend for and adopt as entrepreneurial support and what migrants need is at the core of the lack of clarity about governmental support we underlined at the beginning.

Several papers find that underlying assumptions, prejudices, stereotypes, and institutional and cultural differences are ingrained in governmental policies, therefore hindering the development and growth of migrant entrepreneurship (Billore, 2011; Eimermann et al., 2019; Graham & Pottie-Sherman, 2021; Kontos, 2003; Ozasir-Kacar & Essers, 2023). Such discrepancy gives origin to a lack of trust between the governmental bodies and the migrants, which in turn translates into miscommunication problems and a lack of information on the existing policies in support of entrepreneurship (Kushnirovich, 2009; Santamaria-Alvarez & Śliwa, 2016). For example, some early papers showed that migrants were influenced by prejudices about governmental policies and lacked awareness of state assistance by feeling that it was not “meant for them” (Kontos, 2003; Leung, 2003).

Migrants have what Kushnirovich (2009) calls the “comparative disadvantage”: they have to face several structural and sociocultural barriers to entrepreneurship that add up to the set of challenges native entrepreneurs encounter as well. Indeed, both categories of entrepreneurs share difficulties related to bureaucracy, access to resources, and business skills. In addition, migrants have to confront the liability of newness (Stinchcombe, 1965), which is often overcome through ethnic resources and pre-existing networks. Migrant

entrepreneurs often adopt strategies to solve major hindrances based on their individual characteristics and personal resources (Leung, 2003). However, the government is the missing actor on the stage.

On the other hand, the government is present and proactive regarding returning migrants. Wei & Zhu (2020) and Croitoru (2021a, 2021b) find that, besides household attributes and social networks, government policy support is the most important factor for successfully attracting returning migrant entrepreneurs back to their home countries.

The diversity of migrants' backgrounds is not accounted for in most reviewed literature. However, as Dzomonda and Fatoki (2018) and Ozasir-Kacar and Essers (2023) state, understanding the migrants' backgrounds is paramount to designing policies supporting migrant entrepreneurship. Specifically, policies should address both entrepreneurs' challenges and needs, and opportunities they might characterize and spot as external actors (Curci & Mackoy, 2010; Santamaria-Alvarez & Sliwa, 2016). As a tentative of looking at the diversity of migrant entrepreneurs concerning policy design, the framework provided by Curci and Mackoy (2010) is a starting point. While categorizing migrant enterprises according to the market they serve and their products and services, the authors reveal the different levels of integration into a host country's mainstream business community and the individual and business factors that matter for policy design<sup>4</sup>. The authors emphasize that governments, business development organizations, and researchers should put more effort into developing the untapped potential of migrant entrepreneurship.

Some authors have discussed entrepreneurship support as part of active labor policies, which should be preferred over passive ones (Marcu et al., 2018). Passive policies, such as unemployment benefits and early retirement schemes, disincentive the active participation of migrants in the labor market and limit their integration into society. Instead, active policies might be represented by accessible and welcoming entrepreneurial support programs, through

which migrants can avoid deskilling, receive bureaucratic guidance, and find technical/business language intermediates. By reviewing this work, education emerges as the crucial milestone to encourage migrant entrepreneurs to leverage and increase their skill set and individual background. Coupled with place-based approaches, it may connect migrant-owned businesses to customers and markets in the mainstream economy. This strategy might lower the entry barriers to the labor market and access to resources and, at the same time, increase engagement in the local economy.

When building on a theoretical background, the majority of the studies refer to the theory of mixed embeddedness by Kloostermann et al. (1999) (e.g., Graham and Pottie-Sherman, 2021; Kontos, 2003; Kushnirovich, 2009; Leung, 2003; Solano, 2023), pointing to the mismatch between demand and supply of policies for migrant entrepreneurship and the low level of inclusion in the society. The theory of mixed embeddedness is paired with models and frameworks (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Waldinger & Aldrich, 1990) that emphasize the role of governmental actors in supporting the entrepreneurial development of ethnic businesses. Following the same reasoning, Dzomonda and Fatoki (2018) refer to the middleman minority theory, the ethnic market niche theory, and the ethnic enclave economies theory. The authors, in particular, argue that migrants as minority entrepreneurs develop businesses in sectors with low barriers to entry, profitable in the short-term, devoted to their ethnic group, and not populated by native entrepreneurs.

Most of the studies report the point of view of migrant entrepreneurs, thus mirroring a bounded perspective on entrepreneurial support by governments. Studies about the supply side are lacking, and it is crucial that researchers further develop these aspects. As highlighted above, there is a lack of clarity on the diverse groups of migrants those policies should address. Lastly, the studies are situated in specific contexts and are only sometimes comparable or generalizable.

**3.2.2 Entrepreneurial support by the environment.** Environment and institutions partially overlap with government and social networks, in that they include all those formal and informal bodies belonging to the social, economic, and political spheres that might support migrant entrepreneurs. Lyon et al. (2007) and Price and Chacko (2009) describe what is meant by the environment and institutions from the perspective of migrants, defining both formal organizations, such as migration offices, the National Asylum Support Service, or job centers; and informal organizations, in both migrant communities and civil society, for example ethnic groups, political and cultural associations.

The local environment is critical in determining obstacles and supporting migrant entrepreneurs (Barth & Zalkat, 2020; Malerba & Ferreira, 2020), especially in the early stages of business development. In particular, adequate support from the environment can leverage migrants' skills and thus increase the opportunities for the local economy and add value to the host society (Backman et al., 2021; Zighan, 2021). Support might derive from the interaction of formal and informal bodies from the business, social, and political spheres of the ethnic and non-ethnic communities (Ruan et al., 2022). In doing so, the obstacles that entrepreneurs face – difficult access to finance, suspicion, lack of information, mismatch in capacities and skills, and linguistic and bureaucratic barriers - can be overcome (Barth and Zalkat, 2020; de Queiroz Falcao et al., 2021; Lyon et al., 2007).

Some studies in this cluster have looked at spatial embeddedness and the sense of belonging of migrants in a place. The sense of belonging to the host country, fostered by the environment, can represent a motivation to become an entrepreneur, going beyond the concepts of necessity entrepreneurs and enclave economy, often linked to migrant entrepreneurship (Munkejord, 2017). Migrants can become significant elements for local socio-economic development when the environment and the local institutions are able to attract and retain migrants and increase their sense of belonging. However, it is key that

migrants get involved in social networks, internal or external to the ethnic group, and receive tailor-made support to reduce cultural differences, language barriers, and discrimination.

Entrepreneurial support initiatives in this domain should fuse social networks and political/social/economic environments to foster spatial embeddedness and, in turn, push forward business development.

The majority of the studies in this group rely on the embeddedness theory, either in the seminal form of Polanyi (1957) and Granovetter (1985), or according to the mixed embeddedness framework developed by Kloosterman and Rath (2001). One of the major limitations of the reviewed papers is the poor definition of the environment, and the overlap with institutions and social networks hinders its understanding and its part in supporting migrant entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the literature is anchored to the perspective of migrants. It does not account for the experience of environmental actors, such as professionals and managers belonging to the entrepreneurial ecosystem, the migration system, the labor market, or the welfare/reception system. Further research should examine the environment's actors in depth to grasp their positioning and role in leveraging existing capacities.

### **3.2.3 Entrepreneurial support by entrepreneurship programs and incubators.**

Several entrepreneurship programs and incubators (Berntsen et al., 2022) exist to support refugees (Nijhoff, 2021) and other migrant entrepreneurs (Högberg et al., 2016). They can nurture entrepreneurial knowledge (Bhagat & Roderick, 2020; Harima et al., 2019) and provide migrants with support to start or grow a business (Barth & Zalkat, 2021; Crea et al., 2017).

According to the studies in this review, entrepreneurship programs and incubators are funded by international donors, financial actors (Bhagat & Roderick, 2020), the government (Birdthistle, 2019), and non-government organizations (Nijhoff, 2021). They provide participants with theoretical and practical support within a limited timeframe, usually six

months (Harima et al., 2019). Among the different types of support they provide, there are coaching (Harima et al., 2019), networking (Högberg et al., 2016), mentoring, counseling, and financial assistance (Birdthistle, 2019).

Many studies in this cluster describe the motivational factors and entrepreneurial barriers as antecedents for migrants to enter entrepreneurship support programs (Birdthistle, 2019; Högberg et al., 2016). Motivations to take part in such initiatives and programs are the need to access business guidance, assistance for company registration and financial statements writing, as well assistance in accessing social welfare, as in the case of migrants in Europe – e.g., Germany (Harima et al., 2019) and Sweden (Barth & Zalkat, 2021); and in other continents – e.g., Nigeria (Birdthistle, 2019) and Kenya (Bhagat & Roderick, 2020). Participation in these initiatives and programs is also explained by entrepreneurial barriers for migrants (Lyon et al., 2007; Rashid & Cepeda-García, 2021), such as lack of educational qualifications (Barth & Zalkat, 2021), cultural differences (Barth & Zalkat, 2021), ethnic/racial discrimination (Rashid & Cepeda-García, 2021), complex laws, policies, and regulations (Qin, 2023). Some benefits migrants experience, on an individual level, by participating in entrepreneurship programs are changes in risk perception, empowerment, and self-efficacy (Marchand & Dijkhuizen, 2018).

To date, the published studies are not providing sufficient information to assess whether entrepreneurship programs and incubators are oriented toward certain types of industries. Only two studies in our review provide information about this, discussing initiatives in the agro-food industry (Barth & Zalkat, 2021) and retail, creative industries, services, and hospitality (Berntsen et al., 2022).

Only three articles in this cluster refer to some theory: mixed embeddedness and social network theory (Meister & Mauer, 2019), cognitive dissonance theory (Qin, 2023), and self-categorization theory (Rashid & Cepeda-García, 2021). From a methodological point of view,

the papers included in this cluster suffer from several limitations, being single case studies conducted at a specific time and looking at the individual level of analysis.

### **3.2.4 Entrepreneurial support by civil society and social economy organizations.**

Civil society and social economy organizations support migrants to access resources to satisfy basic needs and pursue career development (Berntsen et al., 2022). These organizations include non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, associations, and social enterprises (Birdthistle, 2019). Within these support organizations, the role of the educator is that of a “specialist” who offers networking opportunities, specific mentorship for migrant entrepreneurs (e.g., language mentoring), or financial assistance (Birdthistle, 2019). Even though many migrant entrepreneurs benefit from these programs, others are unaware of training programs targeting migrants' needs (Birdthistle, 2019).

The papers in this cluster do not make use of any specific theory. Many studies describe the challenges faced by migrants and refugees (Au & Yew, 2022; Crea et al., 2017) in the host country, e.g., Malaysia, the Netherlands, Ireland, and South Africa. The most recurrent themes include a lack of educational qualifications (Birdthistle, 2019), language barriers (Au & Yew, 2022), and limited access to education and training due to the inability to afford expensive tuition fees (Au & Yew, 2022), which in turn blocks opportunities in the host country's labor market (Crea et al., 2017). Other specific challenges facing refugees are legal constraints (Au & Yew, 2022), and problems with the authorities and the police, related to the latter's corruption (Crea et al., 2017). Given the lack of legal protection and rights for refugees in the host country, they must engage in entrepreneurial activities as the only way to earn their livelihood, hoping to avoid incurring into institutional voids (Au & Yew, 2022). In light of these issues, civil society and social economy organizations provide small amounts of money for vocational skills training to help migrants start their businesses (Crea et al., 2017).

However, in most cases, funds are limited, and only a tiny proportion of people can afford attendance to the course.

The studies included in this cluster suffer from one major limitation: they were conducted in only one country. Therefore, to strengthen the findings and advance research on the topic, further research should provide a detailed comparative analysis of the different contexts and legal frameworks that refugees and migrants might encounter, thus providing the reader with a deeper understanding of the kinds of institutional voids they might encounter when starting a new business.

**3.2.5 Entrepreneurial support by financiers and investors.** The papers in this cluster acknowledge the relevance of accessing financial resources for the survival and growth of migrant-owned businesses. To this extent, Kushnirovich and Heilbrunn (2008, p. 169) provide an overview of funding sources for migrant businesses, which has been revised to include additional sources of finance (e.g., venture capital and crowdfunding), as shown in Table 2. While the funding sources are comparable to the ones needed and available to other entrepreneurs, migrants can count on transnational and co-ethnic sources of finance. However, the literature is generally consistent in finding that migrant entrepreneurs have more difficulties obtaining formal, non-ethnic forms of capital due to a lack of language proficiency, formal credit history, and problems with financial administration and bureaucratic legislation.

**Table 2 – Funding sources for migrant businesses**

Equity	Personal savings: - money brought from the home country - money saved in the host country	Ethnic Non-ethnic	Informal
	Venture capital	Ethnic/non-ethnic	Formal
	Business angels	Ethnic/non-ethnic	Formal
	Equity crowdfunding	Ethnic/non-ethnic	Formal
Debt	Family	Ethnic	Informal

Friends	Ethnic/non-ethnic	Informal
Rotating credit associations	Ethnic	Informal
Government financial support	Non-ethnic	Formal
Bank loans: - non-ethnic commercial banking - ethnic banking	Non-ethnic Ethnic	Formal
Credit company	Non-ethnic	Formal
Trade credit (business associates): - from ethnic suppliers - from non-ethnic suppliers	Ethnic Non-ethnic	Formal
Miscellaneous sources	Non-ethnic	Formal

Source: revised and adapted from Kushrinovich & Heilbrunn (2008)

Kushrinovic and Heilbrunn (2008) investigate the relationship between some characteristics of migrant entrepreneurs/businesses concerning the scope (size) of funding, the proportion of informal vs. formal funding, and the sources (ethnic vs. non-co-ethnic funding). By comparing a variety of companies and entrepreneurs selected among Israeli-born or entrepreneurs from Former Soviet Union (FSU) countries, the authors find that the scope of funding in migrant business is smaller than the one in natives, which means that migrants work with smaller amounts of initial capital. In addition, migrant entrepreneurs prefer informal sources of capital. However, in the study sample, native and migrant entrepreneurs draw equally on personal savings, whereas natives have more family-sourced funding.

The paper by Fatoki (2014) shows the same trends in a different context: new and established small companies in South Africa. Based on a sample of 29 respondents, the author finds that owners' contributions, family, and co-ethnic support are the most widely used forms of finance. The needs for financing and the sources slightly change during the company's growth. In fact, during the start-up phase, migrant entrepreneurs face difficulties accessing formal, non-ethnic capital (e.g., trade creditors and banks) due to a lack of adequate equity of collateral and unwillingness to provide information. Instead, the use of formal,

external non-ethnic sources of finance increases as migrant entrepreneurs become more established. Here, migrants use a combination of internal equity and debt from commercial banks and trade creditors. External equity from venture capitalists is nonexistent in this context of research.

Another missing piece in entrepreneurial finance for migrants, according to Kushrinovic and Heilbrunn (2008), is access to public schemes/donors – around 90% of the respondents in the study never applied to these schemes, and almost none were aware of additional forms of government support. This gap is relevant because receiving a designated debt (i.e., a debt supported by the government) significantly increases the scope of initial investment by favoring additional debt and reducing informal resources (but not the ratio of ethnic resources).

Some other papers in this cluster analyzed the support provided by financiers with respect to a specific context, i.e., refugee entrepreneurs. As described by Kachkar et al. (2016, 2017), while the situation of refugees might be considered temporary, reality shows that they can spend decades in camps, shelters, or poor urban areas. Therefore, many initiatives have proposed durable solutions to these "protracted" situations, mainly through economic engagement, to stimulate refugees' local inclusion. Some of these initiatives and programs regard the establishment of refugee-led micro-enterprises. NGOs and humanitarian agencies often run these support programs, providing financial services (i.e., start-up capital) and non-financial services (e.g., training, consultation, and monitoring). While some works show a positive impact of these initiatives, they are challenged by legal issues (e.g., restrictions on refugees' economic rights), low availability of adequate funding (e.g., microfinance and microcredit programs), lack of marketing assistance (e.g., access to market, financial and human resources, skills, resources), high financing costs (i.e., interest rates and

hidden charges), limited access for refugees, and lack of willingness to invest from private and public actors.

As highlighted by the two papers by Kachkar et al. (2016, 2017), compliance with Islamic finance rules can represent an additional aspect complicating or limiting the development of financial support to these micro-enterprises – not only for refugee entrepreneurs but also for displaced and war-affected entrepreneurs. The authors, therefore, propose cash Waqf as a model for refugee entrepreneurship – implying fundraising by NGOs and NPOs that issue shares and certificates with various denominations, either temporary or perpetual in time, purchased by individuals or institutions. The NGOs and NPOs manage the fund and channel the profits for specified charitable purposes. In addition to financing and marketing services, the model can include a training division to improve refugees' business skills. Microfinance groups can also facilitate access to finance by refugees. In this regard, Easton-Calabria and Hakiza (2021) have studied refugee-led microfinance groups in Uganda, which not only allow access to capital and a reasonable time to repay the loans, but also provide a space for social support and business mentoring through the provision of advice and companionship to discuss business challenges. In addition, locals and refugees come together to receive and offer financial and emotional support; thus, these groups represent spaces for integration. Refugee-led microfinance groups are often based on same-language (rather than nationality) affinity and owned only by community members. The groups primarily interact with organizations such as NGOs or formal microfinance institutions to receive training. Overall, their impact is financial (e.g., the collected interests contribute to individual members' earnings), social (e.g., community cohesion), and practical (e.g., allowing access to flexible and convenient credit).

Analyzing the specific support from financiers and investors for migrant entrepreneurship requires balancing the uniqueness linked to migrant entrepreneurs'

liabilities in accessing capital and the similitudes with other entrepreneurs in the same business class. On the one hand, the "liability of outsidership" faced by migrant entrepreneurs is manifest in difficulties in mastering the local language, and thus building interpersonal trust and sharing knowledge in business settings (e.g., Lagerström & Andersson, 2003), the lack of formal credit history, and lack of understanding of the regulatory, administrative, and bureaucratic environment. At the same time, migrant entrepreneurs can count on co-ethnic and co-linguistic networks in the host country, home country, or internationally. However, the diversity of migrant entrepreneurs is also a factor that should always be taken into account: different ethnic groups look for different sources of funding (Kushrinovic & Heilbrunn, 2008), religion might represent a sensitive topic to take into account (Kachkar et al., 2017), and individual characteristics (e.g., economic status, gender, number of dependents, social networks, human capital; Kushrinovic & Heilbrunn, 2008) can complement or substitute other group- or context-level dynamics. It is recommended that future research includes diverse groups of migrants and their businesses (e.g., Wang & Warn, 2019).

A striking aspect of the papers retrieved for this review is that none deals with the specific support provided by venture capitalists, business angels, or crowdfunding. This gap might be related to the research design employed by these studies, mainly focusing on small samples of micro-small companies operating in low-value-added activities or traditional sectors. Only one paper compared migrant and native entrepreneurs (Kushrinovic & Heilbrunn, 2008), but using convenience sampling and therefore being unable to isolate statistical differences concerning financing support.

Another critical yet neglected topic concerns public finance tools' role in supporting migrant entrepreneurs. While bottom-up or migrant-led initiatives might become more readily accessible and known to migrant entrepreneurs (e.g., Easton-Calabria & Hakiza,

2021), the lack of awareness and access to government-led finance is a negative aspect, which signals inefficiency in the existing governmental policy in reaching diverse target groups, and communication failures (Kushrinovic & Heilbrunn, 2008).

**3.2.6 Entrepreneurial support by social networks.** One of the recurring topics in this cluster is the language and communication barriers faced by different groups of migrants (Arslan et al., 2022; Barth & Zalkat, 2021; Ruan et al., 2004), together with other critical factors such as lack of business understanding, distrust, poor awareness of laws and legislation, cultural differences, ethnic/racial discrimination, complex regulations, limited access to finance, and lack of business skills (Alexandre et al., 2019; Arslan et al., 2022; Au et al., 2022). In this regard, social network support in the host country plays a crucial role (e.g., Bart et al., 2020; Bouk et al., 2013).

Arslan et al. (2022) found that language and education barriers might prevent ethnic minority entrepreneurs from establishing and maintaining supply relationships with local companies (e.g., needing to contact headquarters formally), thus being pushed to resort to co-ethnic suppliers or same-language suppliers. A similar conclusion can be seen in the study by Au et al. (2022), which found that language diversity increased the vulnerability of refugees, limiting market participation and shaping interactions with economic actors. On the contrary, Alexandre et al. (2019), who discuss the situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, offer a different perspective. They argue that the primary solution for those who want to settle in the country is to create their own jobs. Syrians in Lebanon have the advantage of knowing Lebanese culture, as they speak the same language. This "nonlinguistic" barrier is less of a constraint for new business creation. It helps would-be entrepreneurs in the host country to build and maintain business relationships and to manage the liability of newness (Barth & Zalkat, 2020).

Social interactions with social ventures and mainstream society can help refugee entrepreneurs establish relationships and receive support beyond their entrepreneurial activities (Au et al., 2022). Migrant entrepreneurs often rely on cultural and public networks to access information, financial support, and business relationships (Barth & Zalkat, 2020; Bouk et al., 2013). The pull factors that motivate entrepreneurial activities include the availability of social networks within the diaspora, which facilitate adaptation and communication, and the competitive advantage offered by lower prices in the market (Alexandre et al., 2019).

#### 4. Discussion

The steadily growing but still fragmented literature about entrepreneurial support for migrant entrepreneurs motivated embarking on this systematic literature review. The analyses of 69 international articles, retrieved from Scopus, highlighted the following sources of entrepreneurial support: government, environment, entrepreneurship programs and incubators, civil society and social economy, financiers and investors, and social networks.

After providing an in-depth overview of the themes covered by the papers in each of these clusters, the chapter summarizes the most studied outcomes and the lesson learned in Table 3, and it discusses shortly the implications in terms of future research recommendations.

**Table 3 – Most studied outcomes and lessons learned for different sources of entrepreneurial support**

Source of support	Most studied outcomes	Lessons learned
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Factors driving entrepreneurial activities</li> <li>● Policies to support entrepreneurship</li> <li>● Barriers to entrepreneurial activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Governments should understand the background of migrant entrepreneurs to design supports that address the needs, challenges, and opportunities incomers might face.</li> <li>● Policies focused on education and active labor involvement have shown to be more beneficial for the local economy and society in the long run.</li> </ul>

Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Integration in the local economy and society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The environment is crucial to boost business development since it helps to reduce cultural differences, language barriers, and discrimination.</li> <li>● The sense of belonging and the spatial embeddedness of migrants in the environment is positive for the local society, the local economy, and the migrants themselves.</li> </ul>
Entrepreneurship programs and incubators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Enterprise growth</li> <li>● Entrepreneurial knowledge</li> <li>● Intention to start a business</li> <li>● New venture creation</li> <li>● Career opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Migrant entrepreneurs are considered "diverse entrepreneurs."</li> <li>● Entrepreneurship programs and incubators supporting refugees and migrants should combine their focus from increasing individual knowledge and skills to helping aspiring entrepreneurs overcome contextual barriers.</li> <li>● Refugee business incubators are often public or nonprofit organizations that cannot offer refugees financial capital. Moreover, they have a limited capacity to offer industry-specific support because of the heterogeneous nature of refugees.</li> </ul>
Civil society and social economy organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Intention to start a business</li> <li>● Enterprise growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Most often, migrants and refugees engage in entrepreneurial activities because it is the only way to earn money for their livelihood.</li> <li>● Although civil society and social economy organizations provide support to migrants and refugees, resources are limited, and only a small portion of applicants are able to take advantage of them.</li> </ul>
Financiers and investors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Difficulties of migrant entrepreneurs in accessing finance.</li> <li>● Prevailing sources of funding</li> <li>● Role of civil society and social economy organizations, especially for refugee entrepreneurs</li> <li>● Religion as a crucial factor (e.g., Islamic finance)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There is a need to define "what is different" comparing migrant and native entrepreneurs' financial support.</li> <li>● Migrant entrepreneurs are a diverse group (e.g., ethnicity, religion, and other individual characteristics that complement or substitute other group- or context-level dynamics).</li> <li>● Need to better understand whether and how any entrepreneurial support is provided by venture capitalists, business angels, crowdfunding, and public finance.</li> </ul>

Social networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Business network development</li> <li>● New venture</li> <li>● Enterprise growth</li> <li>● Access to funding</li> <li>● Employment generation</li> <li>● Network expansion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Language and non-language barriers significantly impact the entrepreneurial experiences of migrants.</li> <li>● Overcoming the barriers involves network support, which is conducive to accessing language courses, guidance and training, familiarity with the host country's culture and regulations, and resources.</li> </ul>
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Source: Authors' own elaboration

The reviewed studies generally lack a clear theoretical framework, being rather descriptive about specific initiatives. In terms of methods, many studies are qualitative, focused on a single research context, thus limiting generalizability and showing a prevalence of European-centric studies (in terms of the host country, see Table A3).

This chapter suggests that scholars, to advance future research in this field, need to conduct comparative analyses to explore how different demographic and socio-economic factors, also originating from the refugees' and other migrants' home countries and in a transnational perspective, influence their access to entrepreneurship support, and the obtained benefits. Furthermore, there is a need for research that encompasses comparative analysis across diverse contexts and legal frameworks (Au et al., 2020) and the incorporation of more diverse samples.

To achieve this, scholars should adopt comparative methodologies, such as multiple case studies or accessing/collecting comparative data about entrepreneurship support programs in different national and cultural contexts. Another line of inquiry should address the dynamics of the processes regarding migrant entrepreneurs' support, for instance, by conducting supply-side investigations (e.g., inquiring inclusiveness of entrepreneurial ecosystems; Martinelli & Bolzani, 2021). Finally, it would be imperative to study the outcomes of access to and provision of entrepreneurship support to migrant entrepreneurs, implementing robust methodologies to assess causality, such as randomized control trials or other experimental techniques.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Started in November 2004 and owned by Elsevier, Scopus is recognized by some scholars and bibliometricians as having a broader coverage for the social sciences and humanities than the Web of Science Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI-WOS) database (e.g., Harzing, 2013; Scitech Strategies, 2012). Scopus includes over 84 million records from over 7,000 publishers (Scopus, 2022).

<sup>2</sup> As mentioned before, we rely on the definition by Ratinho et al. (2020), which states that entrepreneurial support deals with *structured activities* that are, in a way, purposeful and unidirectional.

<sup>3</sup> A comparative overview between the types of entrepreneurial support categorized by Ratinho et al. (2020) and our categorization is offered in Table A2.

<sup>4</sup> According to the authors, the relevant factors are education, place of birth, years in the host country, language fluency, age, gender, the prevalence of ethnic employees and ethnic suppliers.

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## Appendix A

**Table A1 – Outlets of sampled articles**

<b>Source title</b>	<b>N. articles</b>	<b>% on total</b>
International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research	7	10%
Journal of Enterprising Communities	6	9%
International Migration	4	6%
Sustainability (Switzerland)	4	6%
Entrepreneurship and Regional Development	3	4%
Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship	3	4%
Academy of Entrepreneurship Journal	2	3%
Contemporary Issues in Entrepreneurship Research	2	3%
Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development	2	3%
Annals of Anthropological Practice	1	1%
Asian Population Studies	1	1%
Berkeley Planning Journal	1	1%
Canadian Geographer	1	1%
Development Policy Review	1	1%
Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education	1	1%
Education and Training	1	1%
Environment and Planning A	1	1%
Ethnic and Racial Studies	1	1%
Ethnicities	1	1%
European Urban and Regional Studies	1	1%
International Journal of Business and Globalisation	1	1%
International Journal of Entrepreneurship	1	1%
International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship	1	1%
International Journal of Management and Enterprise Development	1	1%

International Journal of Public Sector Management	1	1%
International Small Business Journal	1	1%
International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship	1	1%
International Social Work	1	1%
Islamic Quarterly	1	1%
ISRA International Journal of Islamic Finance	1	1%
Journal of Business Ethics	1	1%
Journal of Contemporary European Studies	1	1%
Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies	1	1%
Journal of Rural Studies	1	1%
Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship	1	1%
Journal of the American Planning Association	1	1%
Local Economy	1	1%
Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences	1	1%
Millennial Asia	1	1%
Policy and Practice	1	1%
Regional Science Policy and Practice	1	1%
Small Business Economics	1	1%
Thunderbird International Business Review	1	1%
Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences	1	1%
Work, Employment and Society	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table A2 – Comparison between the categorization of Entrepreneurial Support by Ratinho et al. (2020) and our own**

<b>Categorization by Ratinho et al. (2020)</b>	<b>Our categorization</b>
Government	Government
Environment	Environment
Entrepreneurship centers and programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Small business development centers</li> <li>- Entrepreneurship programs</li> </ul>	Entrepreneurship centers and programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Small business development centers</li> <li>- Entrepreneurship programs</li> <li>- Incubators</li> <li>- Accelerators</li> </ul>
Business incubators	
Investors and financiers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Venture capitalists</li> <li>- Business angels</li> </ul>	Investors and financiers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Venture capitalists</li> <li>- Business angels</li> <li>- Microfinance</li> <li>- Banks</li> </ul>
Universities	Universities
Science parks	Science parks
	Civil society and social economy organizations
	Social networks outside family and friends

**Table A3 – Categorization of home and host country of migrant entrepreneurs studied in the sampled papers**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Home country</b>	<b>Host country</b>
Abuhussein, 2022	Not specified	Western Asia
Alexandre et al., 2019	Western Asia	Western Asia
Arslan et al., 2022	Western Asia	Northern Europe
Asoba, 2020	Africa	Southern Africa
Au et al., 2022	Southern Asia; Western Asia; Western Asia; South-eastern Asia; Southern Asia	South-eastern Asia
Backman et al., 2021	Northern Africa, Eastern Africa, Western and Southern Asia	Northern Europe
Barth & Zalkat, 2020	Northern Africa	Northern Europe
Barth & Zalkat, 2021	Not specified	Northern Europe
Berntsen et al., 2022	Western Africa; Western Asia; Eastern Europe	Western Europe
Bhagat & Roderick, 2020	Not specified	Eastern Africa
Billore, 2011	Southern Asia	Eastern Asia
Birdthistle, 2019	Western Africa	Northern Europe
Bouk et al., 2013	Western asia; Northern Africa	Western Europe
Crea et al., 2017	Africa	South Africa
Croitoru, 2021a	Europe	Eastern Europe
Croitoru, 2021,b	Europe	Eastern Europe
Curci & Mackoy, 2010	Not specified	Northern America
de Lange et al., 2021	Northern Africa	Western Europe
Dzomonda & Fatoki, 2018	Not specified	Southern Africa
Easton-Calabria & Hakiza, 2021	Africa	Eastern Africa
Eimermann et al., 2019	Southern Europe, Western Europe, Northern Europe	Northern Europe
Falcao et al., 2021	Southern America	Northern America

Fatoki, 2014	Not specified	South Africa
Girling, 2022	Eastern Europe, Western Europe, America	Eastern Europe
Graham & Pottie-Sherman, 2021	Not specified	Northern America
Harima et al., 2019	Western Asia, Southern Asia, Western Asia, Southern Europe, Middle Africa	Western Europe
Heilbrunn & Kushnirovich, 2008	Not specified	Western Asia
Högberg et al., 2016	Western Asia; Eastern Africa	Northern Europe
Huang & Liu, 2019	Not specified	Not specified
Idris, 2019	Not specified	America
Janjuha-Jivraj, 2003	Eastern Africa	Northern Europe
Johnson & Shaw, 2019	Western Asia	Western Europe
Kachkar, 2017,	Not specified	Not specified
Kerr et al., 2017	Not specified	Northern America
Kontos, 2003	Western Asia, Southern Europe, Northern Africa	Central Europe
Kushnirovich, 2009	Eastern Europe	Western Asia
Kushnirovich & Heilbrunn, 2008	Eastern Europe	Western Asia
Leung, 2003	China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam	Central Europe
Lyon et al., 2007	Northern Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Western and Southern Asia	Northern Europe
Malerba & Ferreira, 2020	Not specified	Not specified
Marchand & Dijkhuizen, 2018	Western Asia; Southern Asia	Western Europe
Marcu et al., 2018	Not specified	Northern, Central and Southern Europe
Meister & Mauer, 2019	Western Asia	Western Europe
Munkejord, 2017	Eastern Europe	Northern Europe
Nayak et al., 2019	Asia	Southern Asia
Newman & Christensen, 2021	Not specified	Not specified
Nijhoff, 2021	Not specified	Western Europe

Ozasir-Kacar, & Essers, 2021	Western Asia	Western Europe
Price & Chacko, 2009	Eastern Africa, South America	Northern America
Qin, 2023	Not specified	Not specified
Ram et al., 2022	Africa, Asia	Northern Europe
Rashid & Cepeda-García, 2021	Not specified	Western Europe
Ruan et al., 2022	Eastern Asia	South-eastern Asia
Santamaria-Alvarez & Śliwa, 2016	Southern America	Northern America
Saxenian & Edulbheham, 1998	Eastern Asia, Southern Asia	America
Simarasl et al., 2021	Not specified	Not specified
Solano, 2021	Not specified	Not specified
Wade, 2020	Not specified	Not specified
Wang & Warn, 2019	Eastern Asia	Australia and New Zealand
Wei & Zhu, 2020	Eastern Asia	Eastern Asia
Yu et al., 2021	Not specified	Central Asia
Zimmerman, 1989	Western Asia	Western Asia

### Short biographies of the authors

**Greta Serpente** is a Ph.D. candidate in Management at the University of Bologna (Italy) since the academic year 2019-2020. Before entering this program, she earned a Second Cycle Degree in Economics and Management from the University of Pescara (Italy). Her research interests regard entrepreneurship, specifically focusing on entrepreneurship education and training offered by entrepreneurial support organizations. During her Master's degree, she conducted research on the role of human capital trust during an M&A between a start-up and a temporary industry agency.

**Giulia Martinelli** is a Ph.D. Candidate in Regional Science and Economics Geography at the Gran Sasso Science Institute. After obtaining a Master of Science in Economics from Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies and the University of Pisa, she collaborated with tsm|Trentino School of Management in culture, tourism, and local development. She was also a Research Fellow of the Management Department of the University of Bologna, where she worked on a project linking incubation, migrant entrepreneurship, and competencies. During her Master, she was an intern at the OECD Trento Center for Local Economy, where she worked on spatial productivity and local development. Her current research interests are related to mental health, climate change, innovation, and societal well-being.

**Daniela Bolzani** is an Associate Professor in Management at the Alma Mater Studiorum-Università di Bologna. After 5 years of work in the domain of financial audit and of development cooperation in Europe and Africa, Daniela obtained a Ph.D. in Business Management (2013). She was a postdoctoral fellow at the Departments of Business and Educational Sciences of the University of Bologna (2013-2017), a Junior Assistant Professor in Management at the Università Cattolica in Milan (2017-2020) and at the University of Bologna (2020-2023). She was a visiting scholar at Leeds School of Business, University of Colorado (2013) and HEC Paris (2016); and visiting professor at JUNIA-ISA (2022 and 2023). Her research concerns entrepreneurial decision-making with a focus on diversity (e.g., culture, gender) and social inclusion. Her research has been published in international journals such as, among others, the *Academy of Management Discoveries*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, *International Journal of Management Reviews*, and books. She coordinates and is a member of numerous European and national projects on these issues and has been a consultant for the OECD and UN-IOM.