# PEDAGOGICAL GUIDEBOOK

# ENTREPRENEURSHIP THROUGH THE LENS OF INTERSECTIONALITY

## Impact, challenges, and opportunities

## Index

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## 1. Deliverable Factsheet

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|---|---|
| Project Number: | 2022-1-CY02-KA220-YOU-000084991 |
| Project Acronym: | Entrepreneurial Herstory |
| Project Title: | Embracing Gender Oriented Approach for Entrepreneurial Growth through the Lens of Intersectionality and Applauding the Virtues of Mistakeful Learning |
| Output: | Pedagogical Guidebook "Entrepreneurship Through The Lens Of Intersectionality - Impact, Challenges, And Opportunities" |
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| Approved by: | Citizens in Power (CIP), Center for Social Innovation (CSI), HELLIXCONNECT EUROPE S.R.L., IDM-Consulting B.V., DRAMBLYS, Challedu |
| Abstract: | Please see below |
| Keyword list: | Unconventional Women Entrepreneurship, Positive representation, Intersectionality, Marginalised Groups, Success and failure mindsets |
| Please cite as: | Entrepreneurial Herstory (2023). *Pedagogical Guidebook Entrepreneurship Through The Lens Of Intersectionality - Impact, Challenges, And Opportunities.* Accessible at https://entrepreneurialherstory.eu/ |
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## 1.1 Partnership

| Name | Role | Country |
|---|---|---|
| Citizens in Power (CIP) | Coordinator | Cyprus |
| Center for Social Innovation (CSI) | Partner | Cyprus |
| HELLIXCONNECT EUROPE S.R.L. | Partner | Romania |
| IDM-Consulting B.V. | Partner | Netherlands |
| DRAMBLYS | Partner | Spain |
| Challedu | Partner | Greece |

## 1.2 Revision History

| Version | Date | Revised by |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 21/07/2023 | Entrepreneurial Herstory Consortium |
| 2 | 08/08/2023 | HELLIXCONNECT EUROPE S.R.L. |
| 3 | 20/09/2023 | External & Internal Evaluators |
| 4 | 22/09/2023 | HELLIXCONNECT EUROPE S.R.L. |
| 5 | 11/10/2023 | HELLIXCONNECT EUROPE S.R.L. |

## 1.3 Statement of originality

This deliverable contains original, unpublished work except where indicated otherwise. Acknowledgement of previously published material and the work of others has been made through appropriate citation, quotation or both.

## 1.4 Disclaimer

The ENTREPRENEURIAL HERSTORY project is funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. This document and all its contents reflect only the views of the author, the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of information contained therein.

## 2. Abstract

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the factors influencing entrepreneurship among disadvantaged social groups and women entrepreneurs in Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Spain and the Netherlands. A quantitative analysis of 63 diverse sources and qualitative research through semi-structured interviews with a total of 24 participants were conducted, with the following profiles: entrepreneurship experts, sociologists, and psychologists. The findings revealed the urban model of entrepreneurship is the most suitable for addressing and overcoming the challenges faced by these groups. The study emphasized the significance of robust characteristics, education, training opportunities, a supportive environment, and traits such as commitment, determination, patience, and a positive mindset. Positive representation was found to empower disadvantaged groups, fostering a sense of identity and belonging. Positive self-perception and self-presentation were identified as vital for the advancement of marginalized entrepreneurs. Public institutions were highlighted as crucial stakeholders in supporting these initiatives, calling for a tailored, bottom-up approach. Furthermore, the study identified unique challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, including limited relevant knowledge and skills and social/cultural factors. The importance of intersectionality in networking, community support, solidarity, and the psychological dimension of these challenges was emphasized based on perspectives regarding failure and success, drawn from interviews with psychologists. However, due to the complexity of intersectionality and its specific nuances depending on factors such as ethnicity and national context, generalizations were challenging to make. Also, entrepreneurial success is intertwined with the ability to adapt, innovate, and confront failure constructively. A growth mindset, characterized by a proactive approach to learning from failure and embracing setbacks as opportunities for improvement, emerges as a vital mental framework. Women entrepreneurs, in particular, face unique challenges stemming from societal gender norms and stereotypes. Embracing their natural strengths such as empathy, communication, and sociability, while cultivating self-love and resilience, can empower women to navigate male-dominated industries and surmount external barriers. Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the multifaceted dynamics of entrepreneurship among disadvantaged social groups and women, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions and support mechanisms.

Key Words: **Unconventional Women Entrepreneurship**, **Positive representation**, **Intersectionality, Marginalised Groups, Success and failure mindsets**

# 3. Scope

The "Entrepreneurial Herstory" project is funded by the **Erasmus+ Programme** represented by the **Youth Board of Cyprus**, coordinated by C.I.P. CITIZENS IN POWER (Nicosia, Cyprus), in cooperation with CENTER FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION CSI (Nicosia, Cyprus), CHALLEDU (Athens, Greece), DRAMBLYS (Albacete, Spain), HELIXCONNECT EUROPE (Bucovat, Romania) and IDM-Consulting (The Hague, Netherlands).

The "Entrepreneurial Herstory" project aims to enhance the entrepreneurial mindset among young entrepreneurs. It focuses on identifying role models away from toxic gendered stereotypes and values, by giving minorities and underrepresented communities a voice to express their stories and unfold their memoirs in terms of unconventional entrepreneurship. The project's objectives will be met by capacity building of the partner organisations, associated partners and stakeholders.

The wider target group of Entrepreneurial Herstory is composed of:

- Youth workers/trainers and educators;
- Youth Organisations related to entrepreneurship;
- NGOs & CSOs that are key players in creating the conditions for the realisation of human rights and the transformation to a fair society for everyone with equal opportunities in education and labour; as well as NGOs that promote equality and diversification;
- Women who want to engage in entrepreneurship but belong to an underrepresented community and have been overshadowed by social constructs and limitations;
- Women who belong to ethnic minorities and other marginalized communities;
- Young people whose dreams have been the victims of intersectional discrimination by society;
- Young people with ethnic backgrounds and ethnic characteristics, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants;
- LGBTQI+ people and anyone who is non-heterosexual or non-cisgender;
- People with disabilities, people with vision impairment, deaf or hard of hearing, autism, etc.

The present document is the **Pedagogical Guidebook** on "*Entrepreneurship through the lens of intersectionality - Impact, challenges, and opportunities*" developed by the consortium in the scope of Work Package 2. This Pedagogical Guidebook is the theoretical foundation for constructing women-led entrepreneurial role models, specifically focusing on those from underrepresented communities.

The consortium expects that this result will support the updating of educational materials in the field of Entrepreneurship, increase understanding of inclusiveness and why it is so important for economic growth and social cohesion. Partners anticipate an increased awareness in the Youth Sector of how positive representation can contribute to updating the

socio-economic standards of underrepresented communities by transforming them into an integral part of entrepreneurship.

## 4. Introduction

Entrepreneurship has emerged as a powerful force driving economic growth, innovation and social change. However, the entrepreneurial landscape is not immune to social inequalities and systemic barriers that disproportionately affect marginalized groups. Recognizing the importance of examining entrepreneurship through the lens of intersectionality, this Pedagogical Guidebook offers a comprehensive exploration of the impact, challenges, and opportunities faced by individuals at the intersections of various social identities.

With its focus on intersectionality, this guidebook acknowledges that individuals experience multiple forms of privilege and disadvantage simultaneously due to their race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status and other identity factors. We aim to unravel the complex interplay between entrepreneurship and various axes of social stratification by adopting an intersectional perspective, providing insights that can inform research, policy and pedagogical practices.

The chapters in this guidebook offer a systematic and evidence-based analysis of the key themes related to intersectionality and entrepreneurship. We begin by examining the traits and characteristics of urban entrepreneurs, paying special attention to the challenges faced by disadvantaged social groups and underrepresented/women entrepreneurs. We then delve into the importance of positive representation for marginalized groups in entrepreneurship, emphasizing the benefits of promoting positive role models and showcasing examples of initiatives that highlight the potential of these individuals.

Next, this guidebook presents a quantitative analysis of women entrepreneurs belonging to underrepresented communities, revealing the barriers they encounter and providing valuable insights into intersectional discrimination. We outline strategies to overcome these challenges and capitalize on the opportunities that arise from adopting an intersectional lens in entrepreneurship.

In addition, this guidebook addresses the topic of turning failure into success, recognizing the importance of resilience and learning from setbacks in entrepreneurial endeavours. We encourage entrepreneurs to view it as a steppingstone toward growth and achievement by presenting a general approach to dealing with failure.

This Pedagogical Guidebook aims to enhance our understanding of the complex dynamics between entrepreneurship and intersectionality by shedding light on the experiences and perspectives of marginalized individuals, aiming to foster inclusivity, promote positive change and create a more equitable entrepreneurial landscape. It also aims at introducing the frameworks of intersectionality and positive representation in the field of unconventional entrepreneurship. Intersectionality is also presented as the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression, and we must consider everything and anything that can marginalise people, whereas unconventional entrepreneurship is influenced highly by innovation, passion and perseverance.

# 5. Methodology

This section presents the methodology employed in the current study. The research design encompassed both quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. This chapter outlines the procedures undertaken for the quantitative analysis of 63 diverse sources and the qualitative research involving semi-structured interviews with 12 experts on entrepreneurship and 12 sociologists and psychologists. Additionally, ethical considerations and compliance with GDPR rules are discussed, emphasizing the importance of informed consent from all participants.

## 5.1 Desk Research

The first step in this study involved conducting a review of 63 sources, comprising academic articles, journals, EU level reports and other relevant publications. The purpose of this analysis was to gather existing knowledge and theoretical perspectives on Positive Representation of Minorities in Entrepreneurship Education, the Positive representation of marginalised groups and examples of women entrepreneurs in underrepresented communities.

To begin, a literature review was conducted to identify a broad range of relevant sources. Various electronic databases, such as academic databases, online libraries, and research repositories, were utilized to gather the necessary materials.

Once the sources were identified, a systematic review methodology was employed to evaluate their relevance, quality, and significance. Each source was critically appraised for its theoretical foundation, empirical evidence, and methodological rigor. The findings from these sources were synthesized to develop a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing entrepreneurship.

## 5.2 Qualitative Research: Semi-Structured Interviews with Entrepreneurship Experts

In addition to the quantitative analysis, qualitative research was conducted through semi-structured interviews with 12 experts on entrepreneurship from Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Spain, and the Netherlands. The purpose of this qualitative research was to gain in-depth insights into the experiences, perspectives and challenges faced by individuals with disadvantaged backgrounds involved in entrepreneurial activities in the respective countries.

The selection of participants was guided by purposive sampling ensuring that the sample included a diverse range of individuals with substantial knowledge and experience in entrepreneurship. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to allow for flexibility and enable participants to express their views freely. The interviews were conducted via video conferencing platforms, ensuring that geographical barriers did not hinder participation.

To maintain consistency and comparability, a semi-structured interview guide was developed, encompassing a set of predefined questions and probes. These questions were designed to elicit information about the key traits that underrepresented groups may have in the field of unconventional entrepreneurship and how to take advantage of them and shed light on the

dimension of intersectionality in entrepreneurship. The interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent for subsequent analysis.

## 5.3 Qualitative Research: Interviews with Sociologists and Psychologists

In addition to the interviews with entrepreneurship experts, qualitative research was also conducted through interviews with 12 sociologists and psychologists from the project partners' countries. This approach aimed to explore the sociocultural and psychological factors influencing entrepreneurship in the respective contexts.

Similar to the procedure undertaken with the entrepreneurship experts, purposive sampling was utilized to select participants who possessed expertise in the sociocultural and psychological aspects of entrepreneurship. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide tailored to the participants' professional backgrounds, on how to turn failure into success by shifting one's psychological mindset and the theoretical ground about the psychology of failure and success.

## 5.4 Ethical Considerations and GDPR Compliance

To ensure the ethical conduct of the research, all participants in the qualitative phases of the study were provided with and signed a Consent Form. This form detailed the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of participation, the confidentiality of data and the participants' rights. Participants were required to provide informed consent before their involvement in the study.

Furthermore, the research team adhered to the principles and guidelines outlined in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of personal data. All data collected, including interview recordings and transcriptions, were securely stored and accessible only to authorized researchers and the National Agency responsible for the project. Participants' identities were anonymized during data analysis and reporting to ensure their confidentiality.

# 6. Entrepreneurship and urban entrepreneurs' key traits

## 6.1 Entrepreneurship and the Challenges faced by Disadvantaged social groups

Entrepreneurship is essential for the development of modern societies, contributing significantly to economic growth and prosperity. It is also a rapidly growing field, particularly in urban areas where business opportunities are more abundant and accessible. However, even though it is such a vital aspect of social development, it is not sufficiently inclusive regarding certain disadvantaged social groups. Despite the progress made in increasing access and opportunities for entrepreneurship in the policy arena in some countries (Ram & Jones, 2009), many individuals from disadvantaged groups still face obstacles while navigating the field of entrepreneurship. The challenges faced by different disadvantaged groups, including women, people with disabilities, the LGBTQ+ community, and other people of diverse ethnic, migrant, geographical and socioeconomic backgrounds, result in their marginalization and invisibility in entrepreneurship (Drakopoulou & Keles, 2014; Vorobeva, 2022; Wishart, 2018).

Traditionally, entrepreneurship has been a male-dominated field. The entrepreneur has been stereotypically conceptualised as a white, male figure. These norms and stereotypes, products of patriarchal social structures still in place in many countries (Lassalle & Shaw, 2021), have shaped an entrepreneurial environment in most countries in which certain groups are marginalized. This is especially true for female entrepreneurs and particularly for women with intersectional identities, who often face harsher discrimination and additional obstacles in entering the field and succeeding, due to their gender (Barr, 2015; Ginting-Carlström & Chliova, 2022; Opara et al., 2020; International Labour Organization, 2018). The notion of intersectionality or intersectional identities, which is used as the theoretical framework of this project acknowledges that every person has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression. Therefore, it urges us to consider all factors or identities that, in their intersection, could marginalise certain people (see Chapter 4: "Intersectional Lens in Entrepreneurship"). Nevertheless, this is not a static situation. Despite the lack of traditional forms of power, marginalized groups still possess resources that could impact their situations (Alm & Guttormsen, 2021). Entrepreneurs are embedded in a dynamic cultural and institutional context which is constantly evolving. To the extent that this context becomes more inclusive for women and other underrepresented groups, the whole system will adapt accordingly, paving the way for change and inclusion.

This chapter is informed by a review of the literature on entrepreneurship and interviews with experts on entrepreneurship conducted in the partners' national contexts in Spain, Greece, Cyprus, Romania, and the Netherlands. Its aim is firstly to identify the challenges that underrepresented groups, particularly women, face in the field of entrepreneurship. Then, it will discuss unconventional or contemporary forms of entrepreneurship taking place in urban contexts. It will also explore the differences between entrepreneurial activity in rural contexts, suggesting that the urban model is perhaps the best for addressing the challenges faced by disadvantaged entrepreneurs or women. Next, this chapter is going to discuss the urban entrepreneur's key traits that could enable a person from an underrepresented community to succeed in entrepreneurship against the odds. The chapter will conclude by

providing a few examples of successful entrepreneurs from underrepresented communities who have some of these beneficial traits.

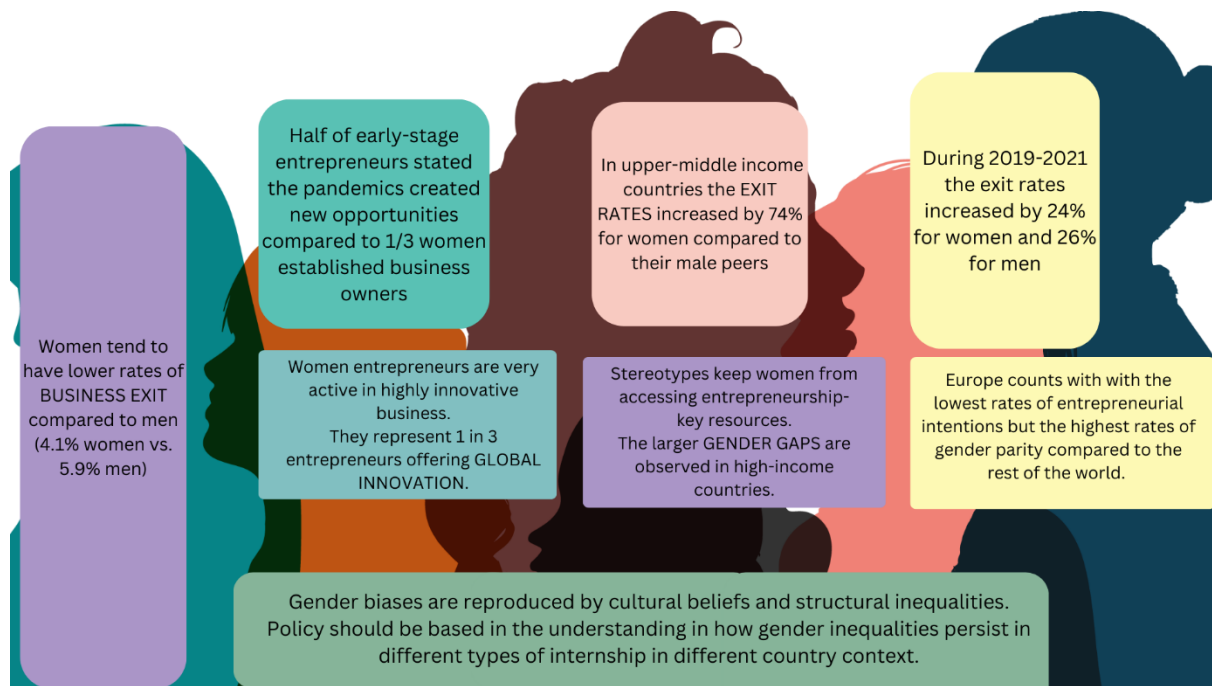## 6.2 Challenges faced by underrepresented/female entrepreneurs

Women are widely considered a vulnerable and often underrepresented social group in several aspects of social life and economic activity, especially in the field of entrepreneurship (International Labour Organization, 2018). Women undertaking entrepreneurship initiatives usually encounter more barriers compared to their male counterparts (Edman & Punkari, 2021). In the case of disadvantaged women, it is normally even more challenging to break social patterns, stereotypes, or even limiting self-perceptions. Because of the limited representation and visibility successful women entrepreneurs receive, aspiring female entrepreneurs also lack inspiring female role models to look up to (Ascher, 2012).

To address this issue, several attempts have been made over the past few decades to increase the representation and participation of women in entrepreneurship, which have yielded some positive results (Ram & Jones, 2009; Drakopoulou & Keles, 2015). Despite the progress that has recently been made, these disadvantaged groups of entrepreneurs, especially women, still face social biases and obstacles. The number of female entrepreneurs may have increased, yet women remain a minority in the 'world' of enterprise and are even considered unconventional by some established people in business (International Labour Organisation, 2018; Edman & Punkari, 2021).

Generally, the main challenges for women entrepreneurs with intersectional identities can vary depending on their specific backgrounds. Some of the challenges they face may be related to cultural barriers, such as traditional gender roles and patriarchal norms. Other challenges may be specific to certain communities of women, such as migrants or other ethnic communities. Some of the main obstacles that women entrepreneurs face include the discriminatory treatment they receive due to traditional gender norms, their limited access to financial capital and support, and achieving work-life balance (International Labour Organization, 2018; Edman & Punkari, 2021), while motherhood has also been identified as a restrictive factor, especially for women in developing countries (Ogundana et al., 2021). In these cases, women entrepreneurs may be hindered due to traditional gender role expectations and the social pressure to conform to traditional family values. Some of the interviewees also reflected this finding.  One of the interviewees from  Greece stressed the additional challenges of combining and balancing motherhood and business:

> *"That was the most difficult thing that has to do with gender for sure – I don't think a man has to deal with things like that at all, he has his business, he's going to leave the child to his wife, his wife is going to raise it and he's going to run his business. That's where the problem is huge."*

Regarding balancing motherhood and business for female entrepreneurs, the same interviewee from Greece also pointed out the lack of affordable structures supporting parents and carers (such as kindergartens) as a significant barrier for women entrepreneurs who are mothers.

Women tend to have lower rates of BUSINESS EXIT compared to men (4.1% women vs. 5.9% men)

Half of early-stage entrepreneurs stated the pandemics created new opportunities compared to 1/3 women established business owners

Women entrepreneurs are very active in highly innovative business. They represent 1 in 3 entrepreneurs offering GLOBAL INNOVATION.

In upper-middle income countries the EXIT RATES increased by 74% for women compared to their male peers

Stereotypes keep women from accessing entrepreneurship-key resources. The larger GENDER GAPS are observed in high-income countries.

During 2019-2021 the exit rates increased by 24% for women and 26% for men

Europe counts with with the lowest rates of entrepreneurial intentions but the highest rates of gender parity compared to the rest of the world.

Gender biases are reproduced by cultural beliefs and structural inequalities. Policy should be based in the understanding in how gender inequalities persist in different types of internship in different country context.

*Source: GEM (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor) (2022). Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2021/22 Women's Entrepreneurship Report: From Crisis to Opportunity. London: GEM*

The literature focusing on women in entrepreneurship further indicates that many of the barriers female entrepreneurs face are related to their limited access to resources, education, networks, and training (Wishart, 2018; International Labour Organization, 2018). Wishart (2018) suggests that under-represented entrepreneurs face common barriers such as discrimination, lack of access to finance, advice, and mentorship, in addition to a lack of business skills and experience. Specific barriers are also identified in some cases, such as language barriers for migrants, institutional and social expectations for women, and the benefits trap for disabled entrepreneurs (Wishart, 2018). Another related barrier to entrepreneurship on the level of policy is the lack of "*tailored public support for under-represented and disadvantaged groups in entrepreneurship*", including women (Kokkinaki et al., 2020, p. 5). To overcome these barriers and increase the visibility and success rates of under-represented entrepreneurs, including women, Wishart (2018) recommends targeted interventions, such as specialist training for advisers and business skills training. Similarly, the International Labour Organization (2018) argues that interventions need to be tailored to the specific needs of women entrepreneurs and address complex social, cultural, and economic factors that constrain their potential. This includes public-private partnerships to support more women and outreach and awareness-raising efforts by local authorities to target marginalized communities (International Labour Organization, 2018).

The literature findings on the underrepresented status of women in entrepreneurship are also applicable to a great extent to the partner organisations' national contexts. In most of the European countries of the project's partnership (Romania, Spain, Greece, Cyprus, Netherlands), female entrepreneurs still face several additional challenges, despite some positive steps made towards inclusion. This situation is also reflected in the qualitative data derived from the interviews with psychologists, sociologists and entrepreneurship experts in

each national context. For example, research participants from Romania pointed out that women from disadvantaged backgrounds, in a culture that is generally not supportive of entrepreneurship, tend to perceive themselves as social benefits recipients or employees rather than entrepreneurs:

> *"Generally, women from disadvantaged backgrounds have difficulties in becoming entrepreneurs, and that's quite true, I think, all over the world, or at least in the developing countries like the ones I used to work and very much true in Romania, which is a country with a non-entrepreneurship friendly culture where vulnerable people end up perceiving themselves as social benefits recipients or employees and not so much as entrepreneurs. They don't have the support to even dream about that. There are some exceptions amongst some women coming from Roma backgrounds and some migrant women."*

However, the responses received from interviewees also reveal that this situation is not pervasive and fixed. Some of the interviewees, while acknowledging the challenges and barriers faced by women entrepreneurs, they were more optimistic when it comes to recent and current developments in female entrepreneurship, both globally and in their national contexts. One of the research participants from Cyprus, for instance, highlighted the benefits of emerging role models as enabling factors for aspiring women entrepreneurs:

> *"The examples are out there, and they are not just one or two, they are many, and while we progress, we see that they keep increasing, which shows us that nothing is impossible."*

The latter, drawing from her personal experience, emphasized that her inspiration is derived from examples of women entrepreneurs (and people in general) who have managed to emerge to the top while having minimal resources, just because they believed in themselves and the potential of their entrepreneurial ideas. Overall, she was optimistic about the occurrences of such examples and role models.

There are several additional challenges for entrepreneurs who belong to underrepresented social groups or for women entrepreneurs. These obstacles make their attempts to promote their business ideas more difficult and hinder the fulfilment of their entrepreneurial dreams and visions harder to accomplish. However, location can play an important role in facilitating positive spaces for growth, inclusion, and visibility for marginalized or disadvantaged entrepreneurs. The next section of the chapter is going to look at the differences between the urban and rural models of entrepreneurship. It will identify some of the advantages and disadvantages of each in terms of making entrepreneurship a more inclusive field.

## 6.3 Urban vs rural entrepreneurs/entrepreneurship initiatives

When it comes to entrepreneurship, the location and context the entrepreneurial activity takes place can play an important role regarding the participation of women and other underrepresented groups in the field. According to most of the research participants interviewed, there are some differences between entrepreneurial activity taking place in urban areas and entrepreneurship initiatives carried out in rural areas in terms of more traditional and unconventional business initiatives. Despite some potential drawbacks of

urban entrepreneurship identified by one of the experts interviewed, such as the pressure and bureaucracy that exists in big cities and the higher levels of competition often encountered there, urban areas generally offer several advantages to aspiring entrepreneurs compared to rural areas (Joo, 2011).

Because of their concentration of increased population numbers, with large numbers of people coming from diverse backgrounds, urban areas are epicentres of diversity. This diverse, innovative environment characteristic of urban areas is an ideal environment for unconventional entrepreneurship initiatives to flourish. A characteristic example of an urban landscape favouring entrepreneurial activity is big metropolitan cities such as London, which constitutes both an epicentre of diversity and economic activity, where ethnic-minority entrepreneurship has been flourishing (Ram & Jones, 2009). However, as one of the entrepreneurship experts from Cyprus has noted, the size of a country does play a role in whether urban and rural areas are differentiated. Referring to the national context of Cyprus, he believes that there is not much differentiation between urban/rural because of the size of the country.

In any case, both the literature and the experts interviewed distinguish between entrepreneurial activity in rural and urban areas and most of the findings support the advantages urban entrepreneurship presents over rural for female entrepreneurs. Most of the research participants interviewed in the partners' national contexts seem to agree that urban areas, in most cases, offer more advantages for women to engage in entrepreneurship. According to one of the entrepreneurship experts from Cyprus, a woman who has an urban background has greater and more advanced acceptability in becoming an entrepreneur, so it is considered a more natural step for her. On the one hand, some of the experts interviewed noted that entrepreneurs venturing into rural areas often have more flexibility and receive more support from the community, which could potentially make it easier for a woman to start a business. On the other hand, however, most of the experts interviewed agreed that women with an urban background overall have a greater advantage over rural female entrepreneurs, as it is more acceptable for them to become entrepreneurs due to the open-mindedness of urban society.

Entrepreneurs in rural areas are more deprived of economic resources, education, and job opportunities, an aspect in which urban female entrepreneurs are more fortunate, as they have more access to training and to human and social capital, and can participate more in associative life (Joo, 2011). Furthermore, the gender gap tends to be larger in rural areas and the patriarchal culture prevalent in these places has kept women from equally accessing the labour market or structures that can help them reconcile their family and professional lives. As a result, female entrepreneurs in rural areas tend to have fewer savings (or limited access to family savings) and fewer market opportunities (Joo, 2011). Another advantage of urban entrepreneurship compared to rural entrepreneurship identified by some of the research participants interviewed is that, in rural areas, there is even greater prejudice against foreign women and other marginalised groups of people, something which is present to a lesser extent in urban societies, as they are usually more diverse and inclusive of minorities. The patriarchal system family structures and the close-mindedness of entrepreneurship in rural

areas does not support female entrepreneurship, therefore, family and professional life are even harder to reconciliate due to these structures with "female entrepreneurs (being) considered a threat among the males".

Another key difference between rural and urban entrepreneurship initiatives undertaken by women mentioned by some of the interviewees is that, in rural areas, women entrepreneurs tend to operate in an informal, ad hoc manner. These rural female entrepreneurs are often focused on agriculture and selling their surplus to nearby urban areas. In contrast, entrepreneurship initiatives undertaken by urban women tend to be more formal and structured, especially in contexts where there are support programs, business incubators, accelerators, and funding. However, these opportunities may be inaccessible for women with low education levels due to the complex and specialised language used, lack of basic training in entrepreneurship and lack of social and institutional assistance. Regarding this, one of the experts mentioned the following:

> "It's quite often (that) people who come from vulnerable backgrounds... didn't have access to a proper education while growing up. So, the lack of equal opportunities is one of the main challenges. If it happens during childhood or teenage years, it's usually perpetuated during adulthood."

There are some opportunities available for formal and structured initiatives in urban areas that provide access to support programs and funding. However, these opportunities tend to be somewhat generic in how they approach and guide aspiring entrepreneurs. This issue is identified in the report by the International Labour Organization (2018), which recommends that the gender-specific needs of women should be taken into consideration when attempts are made to promote entrepreneurship on an institutional level. This includes offering programmes that are specially designed to address the barriers to entrepreneurship that particularly impact women. Additionally, these programs need to be designed and implemented in a gender-sensitive and tailored manner to ensure that they are indeed effective in supporting female entrepreneurship (International Labour Organization, 2018). Overall, the report suggests that there is a significant lack of knowledge about "*what works*" in tackling gender-discriminatory attitudes towards businesswomen (International Labour Organization, 2018). However, to understand the actions needed to be taken to address this issue, it is important to first recognise the specific vulnerabilities of women entrepreneurs belonging to different disadvantaged groups. Acknowledging these women's specific needs, interventions should be designed and implemented that are tailored to the specific needs of women entrepreneurs, addressing the complex social, cultural, and economic factors that constrain their potential in the field (International Labour Organization, 2018; Kokkinaki et al., 2020).

Moreover, according to one of the interviewees, another major disadvantage for a business in the province is the lack of proximity of both resources and information, an issue usually not encountered in urban areas. Some interviewees also mentioned access to greater audiences as a major advantage of urban entrepreneurship, due to the concentration of large numbers of people, a situation that makes the market targeting easier. At the same time, urban entrepreneurs usually tend to be more creative, less motivated by the financial side of work

and more encouraged by the career side of their work, but also more likely to start a new business (Joo, 2011). Furthermore, concerning unconventional entrepreneurship initiatives, one of the interviewees noted that in the cities, there is more support from the community because, in urban environments, there is more openness and acceptance. In addition, an element highlighted was that aspiring entrepreneurs in urban areas enjoy better opportunities for networking and usually receive more financial support in cities, especially when they are working towards an unconventional entrepreneurship model:

> *"It's easier for a woman in an urban area to find the necessary support, to 'knock on the right doors', to network with the right people, but also to get financial support for an unconventional idea, because [unconventionality] is more welcomed in the minds of people in urban areas compared to people in rural areas."*

On the contrary, most interviewees proposed that in the countryside, it is still difficult to accept some progressive or unconventional entrepreneurial ideas.

On the positive side, a good example of successful entrepreneurial activity taking place in urban environments in Europe comes from the case of the Netherlands, which is one of the national contexts participating in this project's consortium. Entrepreneurship is a field that is quite advanced in the Netherlands and the country is considered among the best for businesses, as the Dutch innovation ecosystem facilitates growth and success. According to the Dutch Chamber of Commerce, the number of female entrepreneurs in the Netherlands increased by over 60 per cent in the past decade and the country currently has more than 700,000 companies founded by women entrepreneurs (Netherland Times, 2022). These companies contribute significantly to solving major societal issues.

With regards to the differences between urban and rural entrepreneurs, some of the interviewees pointed out that urban entrepreneurs need to have more patience, flexibility, and 'gut', need to be more accustomed to differences and more tolerant. Urban entrepreneurs also tend to be more unconventional in the sense that they are not bound by more traditional practices that rural areas tend to enforce on entrepreneurs. Most of the interviewees also noted that urban environments tend to be more suitable for unconventional forms of entrepreneurship, as people living in them generally tend to be more open-minded. By contrast, rural environments are usually more oriented towards traditional beliefs and practices.

Therefore, the fact that there are multiple differences between urban and rural entrepreneurship initiatives means that there also exist two respective but distinct entrepreneur models: the urban and the rural entrepreneur. The data collected both from the literature findings and the findings from the interviews with psychologists, sociologists, and entrepreneurship experts suggest that the profile of the urban entrepreneur is more favourable for the development and pursuit of unconventional entrepreneurship initiatives by underrepresented social groups. This is due to the favourable environment of urban areas promoting innovation, diversity, and inclusion. It is in such diverse, urban spaces that aspiring entrepreneurs from underrepresented communities can fulfil their entrepreneurial visions.

This also means that women entrepreneurs who pursue their entrepreneurial ideas in urban areas tend to have increased chances of visibility, recognition, and success.

## 6.4 The Entrepreneur's key traits

As previously stated, urban entrepreneurship is suggested to be the most favourable mode of entrepreneurship, promoting innovative, unconventional, and especially inclusive environments for entrepreneurship. The urban entrepreneur is thus perhaps the most open-minded and well-equipped individual for navigating the challenges involved in the modern entrepreneurship landscape. But what are the key traits of the entrepreneur in general, and more specifically of the urban entrepreneur?

### 6.4.1 Key traits for entrepreneurial success

Overall, when it comes to the personality of entrepreneurs, it sometimes becomes difficult to find common ground and construct a full and comprehensive portrait of the successful entrepreneur. One reason explaining this relates to the diversity present in the literature on entrepreneurship itself. Kerr et al. (2018) suggest that entrepreneurship is so diverse that the terminology is not well-standardized, and the research regarding the core characteristics is not linear, chronological, or progressive. Similarly, the portraits of entrepreneurs are such heterogeneous that they need appropriate labelling to understand better the mechanisms operating in the field.

However, by measuring entrepreneurial success, we can identify the key traits of the entrepreneur that can foster and promote success. Certain personal characteristics are essential in predicting and guaranteeing both entrepreneurial intention and success. These include self-efficacy, conscientiousness, locus of control, need for achievement, and innovativeness (Kerr et al., 2018; Yangailo & Qutieshat, 2022).
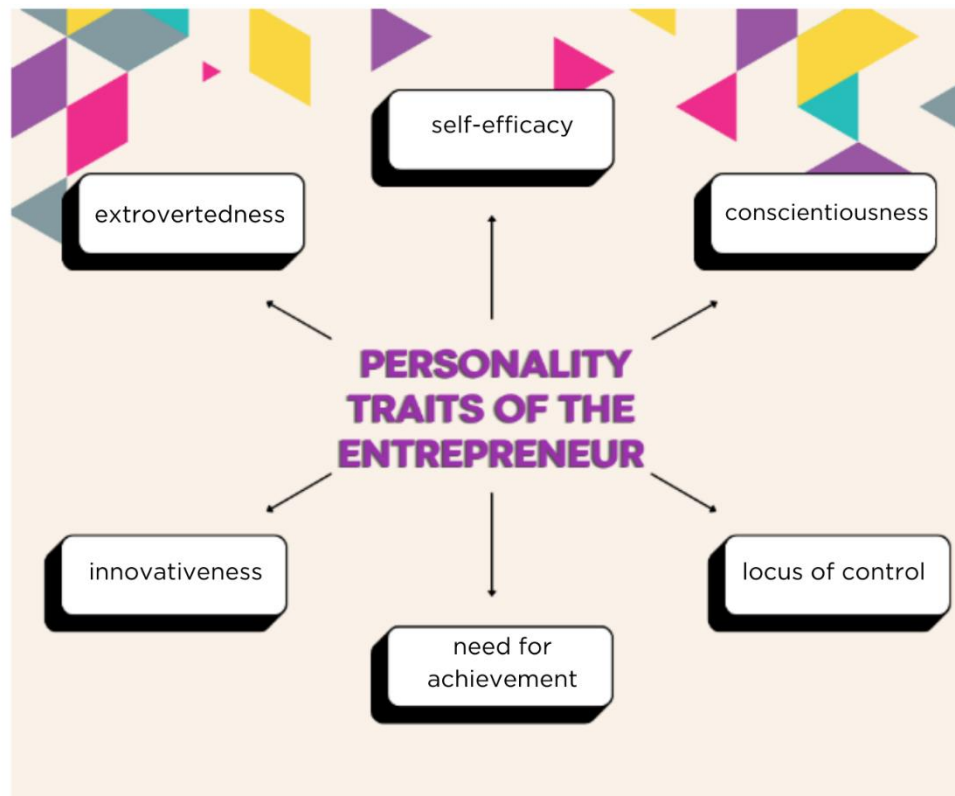
*Source: EH Project created with Canva*

Additionally, entrepreneurs are usually more open to experience, more conscientious and extraverted, as well as less neurotic and agreeable (Kerr et al., 2018). In terms of self-efficacy and innovation, entrepreneurs were also found to thrive on a high level (Kerr et al., 2018; Yangailo & Qutieshat, 2022). In addition, the internal locus of control (the belief that outcomes depend on efforts, skills, and abilities rather than external forces) was found to be high in entrepreneurs, as was their need for achievement (Kerr et al., 2018). These traits are regarded to be critical for entrepreneurs to possess because they enable them to overcome obstacles and persist in the face of failure. Therefore, these characteristics provide the resilience and persistence needed to overcome challenges and obstacles that form part of the competitive entrepreneurial landscapes across different countries, providing the mechanisms to thrive in the field.

In addition, the literature on entrepreneurship also provides an overview of the more business-oriented characteristics of successful entrepreneurs. According to another study by Khosla and Gupta (2017), there are five main characteristics of successful entrepreneurs that are predictive of entrepreneurial and organizational success. These characteristics include the following: i) flexibility in response to market needs, ii) comfort with uncertainty, iii) laser-like focus and execution, iv) big-picture focus coupled with a detailed orientation and v) people management with the right balance of delegation. From this follows that entrepreneurs must be able to cope specifically with uncertainty and strike comfort in ambiguity. Interestingly, entrepreneurs have been found to be very low on uncertainty avoidance, indicating a high level of tolerance for uncertain situations and events. Furthermore, taking risks is widely

identified as an important part of every business and of the success of an entrepreneur, and the success of the firm they establish largely depends on their ability to tide over uncertain times and circumstances.

A factor identified as a barrier in the field of entrepreneurship is fear of failure. This concept is a prominent area of research in entrepreneurship literature, although the precise way it operates in entrepreneurial activity remains unclear (Cacciotti & Hayton, 2015). Interestingly, while fear can have both beneficial and detrimental effects on individual cognition and behaviour, the literature tends to focus on fear as a barrier to entrepreneurial activity (Cacciotti & Hayton, 2015). Despite the dichotomy towards the issue of how fear of failure functions in entrepreneurship, it is suggested that this concept can potentially motivate entrepreneurs and serve as a central element in a theoretical model explaining entrepreneurial behaviour.

### 6.4.2 Female entrepreneurs' key traits

Research on the key traits of the entrepreneur also attempts to explore the topic from the perspective of gender, acknowledging that this factor influences the characteristics entrepreneurs need to develop to navigate the field of entrepreneurship (Nicoletti Morphitou, 2017; International Labour Organization, 2018). Some of the entrepreneurship experts interviewed further emphasized the importance of understanding the social construct of the cultural model of femininity and masculinity in the context of entrepreneurship. Given this gender differentiation when it comes to entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur's traits, the following are some key traits or characteristics that specifically women entrepreneurs tend to have, identified both in research and by the research participants interviewed.

*Robust characteristics*

Both the research on entrepreneurship and some of the experts interviewed also suggest that female entrepreneurship is not only determined by internal factors relevant to the entrepreneur's personality, but they are also equally determined by the environment in which these women navigate (Nicoletti Morphitou, 2017). This is especially relevant when more patriarchal societies are concerned, which often require that female entrepreneurs adjust some of their personality traits in response to their environments.

Some studies conducted in the male-dominated entrepreneurial context of Cyprus, for example, reveal that female entrepreneurs often feel the need to develop more robust characteristics to cope in competitive, male-dominated business environments in which they often fall prey to gendered discrimination. For instance, Nicoletti Morphitou (2017), through a qualitative analysis of 30 Cypriot female entrepreneurs, observes that they often need to develop certain 'defence mechanisms' and "*act many times more aggressively than men to prove their administrative capacity*" (p. 24), facing the realities of being a woman entrepreneur in the hostile, male-dominated Cypriot business landscape. Interestingly, the existence of a hostile, male-dominated environment for female entrepreneurs in patriarchal societies has also been reflected in the interviews conducted with two female entrepreneurs

in Cyprus. This hostile environment, as suggested, is particularly prominent in certain business fields in which women tend to be underrepresented. Accordingly, one of the interviewees from the context of Cyprus highlighted the additional challenges faced by women entrepreneurs venturing into the construction industry, particularly focusing on the sexism women experience in that field.

> *"They need to be women made from iron and steel. Achieving it is hard, but you can do it."*

Due to this hostile environment, the interviewee likewise believes that female entrepreneurs need to be equipped with self-confidence and great passion for their job, as well as the will to succeed in their field. In addition, a research participant from the Romanian context highlighted that an important trait for entrepreneurial success is being strong, resilient and stubborn as a person. For example, an expert interviewed in the Romanian context noted the following:

> *"[People] should definitely be resilient and stubborn in order to really make it in this environment. You really must be of a special, you know, like strong breed [...]."*

*On the other hand, however, opinions among research participants across the partner organisations' national contexts also presented some discrepancies. For instance,* according to the research participants interviewed in the context of Spain, there are certain characteristics that tend to come more naturally to women, such as communication, empathy sociability, thorough analysis and attention to detail. These characteristics, according to the Spanish interviewees, are useful when used in in-person and digital customer relations or brand management.

### *Education*

Another trend in the literature on female entrepreneurship when it comes to the entrepreneur's key traits is the importance successful women entrepreneurs themselves place on education. For instance, the qualitative data of the study by Nicoletti Morphitou (2017) revealed a strong belief in the use of having a competent, even competitive, educational background. Similarly, the findings of the study by Nearchou-Ellinas and Kountouris (2004) also reveal the great significance especially tertiary education bears for female entrepreneurial activity. According to that study, women with tertiary education credentials exhibited stronger entrepreneurial traits, a greater level of enthusiasm and concern for control, decision-making, and social status, in addition to committing themselves to more innovative launching approaches and coaching other women to navigate in the field of entrepreneurship (Nearchou-Ellinas & Kountouris, 2004). Likewise, the literature on entrepreneurship also highlights the beneficial nature of promoting the entrepreneurial spirit at all levels of education, especially secondary and tertiary levels, by implementing entrepreneurship initiatives and programs to motivate students' engagement in entrepreneurship (Maslakçı, Sürücü & Şeşen, 2022).

*Significance of education and training opportunities*

Interestingly, this significance placed on education for achieving entrepreneurial success has also been reflected in the interviews with entrepreneurship experts conducted in the national contexts of the project's partners. Some of the interviewees similarly underlined the importance of education and career guidance as basic ingredients for success in entrepreneurship. According to the experts interviewed, this emphasis on education and career guidance should start at the level of school education. However, the experts interviewed highlighted that this attempt should not be confined to the context of formal education but should essentially continue thereafter by offering people lifelong learning and training opportunities, as well as providing information on business investment opportunities to interested individuals. For instance, an interviewee from Greece expressed the following on the issue:

> *"There should be vocational training to see the aptitudes and to see what everyone could do. That is, what professions are here in Greece, what is the absorption rate, what we like, the land, the sun, tourism, and creation, respectively there are the corresponding sectors. There should be a book, there should be information."*

Another interviewee from Cyprus referred to the need for mentoring programmes for aspiring entrepreneurs, particularly for women:

> *"There's a need for programmes in the context of which an aspiring female entrepreneur can be received by a mentor who will be able to guide and support her…"*

In this way, aspiring entrepreneurs will have access to lifelong learning opportunities to develop and enhance key traits that could mould them into the profile of a successful entrepreneur.

*Significance of a supportive environment and building partnerships*

Additionally, an interviewee from the national context of Spain further highlighted the need to create a supportive environment for women entrepreneurs, an environment which enhances their sense of belonging to a community. According to this expert, a supportive environment characterized by solidarity can foster women entrepreneurs' passion and promote their entrepreneurial ideas:

> *"We encourage women to become entrepreneurs, to create unconventional enterprises that line up with their passion, however, the entrepreneurship environment is non-linear and volatile. Unless we provide them with an ecosystem that supports and facilitates things for them, these businesses will not be sustainable and not survive long."*

As suggested, therefore, failure to provide female entrepreneurs with a supportive ecosystem that can address and accommodate their needs may lead to the failure of their business ventures.

Furthermore, an interviewee from the Romanian context also emphasized the great value of a supportive environment for achieving success in the field of entrepreneurship. In addition to that, the same interviewee highlighted the use of possessing traits that showcase a business mindset, such as the ability to negotiate and build partnerships, particularly stressing in this process the importance of being surrounded by a supportive community. More specifically, the interviewee stated the following:

> *"(…) It is also important to be able to build partnerships and create a network of allies and support persons. Having a very supportive community around you is definitely the factor that eventually makes a difference."*

Interestingly, the same interviewee believes that feminine values tend to promote the ability to build genuine business partnerships:

> *"The femininity values tend to be more open towards creating authentic and valuable partnerships […]."*

This suggests that, according to this interviewee's belief, women are perhaps better equipped to form strong alliances and partnerships, a trait that is considered essential in achieving entrepreneurial success.

*Commitment, determination, patience, and a positive mindset*

The data collected from the entrepreneurship experts in most of the partner counties also highlight many positive traits that could enable women and other underrepresented groups to succeed in entrepreneurship in the national contexts of the partner organisations against the odds. Some of the traits commonly identified as crucial for entrepreneurial success are commitment to one's goals, perseverance, and patience. Some of the experts interviewed, drawing from their teaching and mentoring experience, also identified that determination and drive are important traits for success in entrepreneurship. Furthermore, several of the experts interviewed from most of the partners' national contexts highlighted the importance of hard work, perseverance, and patience as crucial elements for entrepreneurial success. When one possesses these traits, the rest can be learned.

However, as one of the experts expressed, the downside is that individuals who are disadvantaged or lack confidence may not see their full potential, which is a factor that can potentially hinder their success:

> *"I think above all is determination, many women tried to "break the wheel" and they did not achieve it due to lack of determination."*

According to several of the participants interviewed, the key traits for entrepreneurial success for women are determination, dedication, and commitment, as well as having a clearly defined purpose, particularly one that is significant to them, and being disciplined and goal-oriented towards it, combined with self-love and a fair treatment of the self. Another equally important entrepreneurial trait noted by two of the interviewees concerns the ability to accept mistake-making and failure as integral parts of the journey to success. Additionally,

one of the two female entrepreneurship experts interviewed also emphasizes the significance of authenticity and originality for entrepreneurial success. She further highlights the value of adopting a positive mindset and investing in the value of one's dreams. She states the following:

> "When I think positively, what I see is opportunities […], whereas when I think negatively, what I see is problems, which does not help in succeeding in the 'world' of entrepreneurship."

Another significant entrepreneurial trait, according to one of the interviewees from the national context of Cyprus, is self-respect and the courage to sometimes say 'no' when a situation does not serve you, while she also highlighted the virtues of candour, namely the ability to make precise claims and ask for what you want honestly and directly, yet always with respect, as this saves much time for all parties involved.

### 6.4.3 Examples of successful female entrepreneurs and key traits

Some of the experts interviewed who are university professors in entrepreneurship showcased some of the key traits of the entrepreneurs by discussing the examples of successful women entrepreneurs from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as Oprah Winfrey, who overcame discrimination, race, and upbringing challenges and have built successful businesses. The interviewees also mentioned their experiences mentoring people, regardless of their gender, who aspired and succeeded in starting their own businesses, including some of their female students. On the other hand, one of the experts also noted that suffering and pain can also potentially act as ingredients for success, although these negative factors are not necessary. According to him, the reason for this is that those who experience these emotions are in need and are therefore more motivated to improve their life circumstances, as they often must grow more independent and become able to manage their lives on their own. Following form this perspective, the seeming disadvantage a person has could potentially become an advantage.

### 6.5 Conclusion

- ⇒ Introduced entrepreneurship and urban entrepreneur traits.
- ⇒ Informed by a scoping review of academic literature and expert interviews across five national contexts: Spain, Greece, Cyprus, Romania, and the Netherlands.
- ⇒ Identified challenges faced by disadvantaged groups, with a focus on women entrepreneurs.
- ⇒ Explored differences between urban and rural entrepreneurial activities.
- ⇒ Suggested that the urban entrepreneurship model is well-suited to address challenges faced by disadvantaged social groups and women entrepreneurs.
- ⇒ Presented key traits of urban entrepreneurs that can facilitate success for underrepresented communities.

⇒ Emphasized the importance of robust characteristics, education, training opportunities, and a supportive environment.

⇒ Highlighted traits such as commitment, determination, patience, and a positive mindset.

⇒ Concluded by showcasing successful female entrepreneurs from disadvantaged backgrounds who have thrived due to these traits.

# 7. Positive representation for marginalized groups

Positive representation of marginalized groups in any sector or field is crucial for building these individuals' self-confidence and offering disadvantaged people role models to look up to. This is also true when it comes to the field of entrepreneurship. When individuals from marginalised communities see themselves positively represented, they are more likely to develop a sense of belonging and self-worth. This, in turn, leads disadvantaged or underrepresented groups of people to acquire greater confidence in their abilities and potential. This confidence can have a positive impact not only on an individual level but can also become a driving force for the whole community and boost the overall entrepreneurial activity of a country.

Entrepreneurship is one of the fields of social and economic life in which people belonging to marginalised communities face additional hardships (Wishart, 2018; International Labour Organization, 2018). As a result, these disadvantaged groups of people or minorities are often excluded and underrepresented in the field. These include women, individuals with (im)migration status or ethnic background, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals and other disadvantaged communities (see Chapter 1). These communities are dynamic and active in the field of entrepreneurship. However, entrepreneurs from disadvantaged backgrounds are often invisible in the field, and their contributions widely remain unacknowledged (Wishart, 2018; Alm & Guttormsen, 2021). For this reason, the positive representation of these marginalised communities in entrepreneurship is crucial for making the field more diverse and inclusive. This, in turn, will help build more fair societies that ensure equal opportunities for all.

This chapter draws from a review of literature in the field of entrepreneurship and interviews carried out by the consortium with both psychologists, sociologists, and experts on entrepreneurship. The interviews were conducted in the partners' national contexts in Spain, Greece, Cyprus, Romania, and the Netherlands. The chapter overall aims to reinforce that minorities in the field of entrepreneurship are valuable and dynamic and should therefore be positively represented as such. It will first explore the benefits of the positive representation of marginalised groups in entrepreneurship, for the wider society and for the disadvantaged entrepreneurs on a personal level. Then, the chapter will focus on the importance of promoting positive role models with whom marginalised entrepreneurs can identify. Then, the chapter will continue with a section highlighting the great potential of disadvantaged groups of entrepreneurs. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a few examples of national or local initiatives promoting entrepreneurship among marginalised groups, provided by the entrepreneurship experts interviewed in the five national contexts of the consortium.

## 7.1 The importance and benefits of positive representation of marginalized groups in Entrepreneurship

Research on entrepreneurship confirms that there is an overall lack of both attention and positive representation of disadvantaged groups in the field of business (Alm & Guttormsen, 2021). Marginalised groups are often considered to have hardly any self-representation and,

on many occasions, are being disregarded by powerful actors and face discrimination and mistreatment (Chowdhury, 2021). Alm and Guttormsen (2021) emphasise the lack of attention given to marginalized groups' voices and experiences, specifically in business ethics research. However, the authors suggest that, even though disadvantaged groups lack traditional forms of power such as public influence, formal authority, education, money, and political positions, they still possess the required resources to positively influence the structures that determine their circumstances (Alm & Guttormsen, 2021). It is, therefore, essential to shed light on the positive resources and capacities that these marginalised communities possess and to show that, despite their minority status, they participate dynamically in entrepreneurship.

### 7.1.1    Benefits of positive representation of marginalised groups

Despite the lack of positive representation of marginalised groups in entrepreneurship, positive representation of entrepreneurs from disadvantaged communities is essential. It can offer significant benefits and eventually improve and enhance these people's conditions and status in the field, as well as their living conditions. On the one hand, the benefits of positive representation come both on a personal level boosting the disadvantaged entrepreneurs themselves. On the other hand, they are also manifested on a wider social level, especially in relation to business and the economic development of societies (Council of Europe, 2022).

Some of the benefits of the positive representation of marginalised groups in entrepreneurship on a wider social level include the following:

*Economic development*

Positive representation and inclusion of marginalised groups can benefit organisations and businesses, and, therefore, the wider society. The inclusion of underrepresented communities in the workforce can promote the economic development of societies and lead to greater economic performance, especially in cities (Eraydin, Tasan-Kok & Vranken, 2010).

*Social Cohesion and Diversity*

Positive representation of marginalised groups in the business sector and entrepreneurship can also promote social cohesion (Eraydin, Tasan-Kok & Vranken, 2010). According to the Council of Europe (2022), businesses themselves can support social cohesion by recruiting diverse staff and promoting an inclusive culture and working environment. This way, the business sector itself can benefit by enabling minorities to lead innovation by investing in social infrastructure in the local community, such as policies, services, buildings, and other resources (Council of Europe, 2022). Herson (2022) highlights the importance of centring marginalised voices and perspectives on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in corporations' initiatives, rather than relying solely on the perspectives of those in positions of power. For example, in the case of women entrepreneurs, creating a corporate culture that values diversity is a very important step in maximising the impact of female representation (Skaggs, Stainback & Duncan, 2012). Hence, by prioritising true diversity and inclusion, companies and

the wider business sector can create more equitable workplaces and ultimately drive greater innovation and success (Herson, 2022).

Research participants also emphasise the importance of diversity and inclusion in entrepreneurship and the business world. Positive representation can make it easier for marginalised groups to be included and feel a sense of belonging. This can ultimately benefit the entire community of marginalised people, as they can feel seen and empowered as a group. Additionally, positive representation can prevent businesses from losing talent. One of the psychologists interviewed in Romania stated the following:

> "I think that particularly in the entrepreneurship world and the industry business side, what they keep saying is to pay attention to equality because you lose talent. So, I believe that if there is a positive representation of marginalised groups, their inclusion in the entrepreneurship world will be easier."

By actively seeking out and supporting marginalised entrepreneurs and employees, businesses can tap into a diverse range of perspectives and experiences, ultimately leading to greater innovation and success.

*Deconstruction of stereotypes and prejudices against minorities*

At the level of social inclusion, the representation of marginalised groups in different fields has a wider and very significant mission to fulfil. According to the research participants, on one level, positive representation reveals the richness and perspective of different experiences, and, at the same time, it helps challenge and deconstruct negative stereotypes and prejudices against disadvantaged communities. According to one of the psychologists interviewed, representation is important primarily because it leads to a better understanding of the unique difficulties some groups face. Better knowledge and understanding of these challenges can lead us to better ways of handling them, breaking away from negative stereotypes. As one of the interviewees mentioned, these stereotypes tend to be rooted in the existing invisibility of certain disadvantaged groups of people *"Stereotypes feed on invisibility."*

For instance, if somebody only receives negative information about an ethnic minority, if a person does not personally know or engage with anyone from this community, there will hardly be a way to contrast this information and check the validity of this negative representation. As a result, it would be easier for you to believe and embrace this view uncritically. Therefore, representing people from marginalised communities, while at the same time acknowledging their contributions to their fields enhances their visibility and combats negative stereotypes that hinder them from advancing in any given field, including entrepreneurship.

*Better theoretical understanding of disadvantaged groups in business*

A positive representation of marginalised groups in entrepreneurship can also lead to a better theoretical understanding of their specific positions and circumstances. Business ethics

researchers very rarely take into consideration marginalized people's voices and experiences as resources to understand their lives (Alm & Guttormsen, 2021). Positive representation can therefore make society, especially the business sector, more aware and appreciative of the position, capacities and beneficial contribution of minorities to entrepreneurship.

### 7.1.2 Benefits of the positive representation of marginalized groups in entrepreneurship on a personal level for the disadvantaged entrepreneurs themselves

*Empowerment and boost of Self-confidence*

Most of the research participants interviewed agree on one key point: positive representation for marginalized groups is unmistakably related to self-confidence, and self-confidence is key to a successful entrepreneur. Empowering marginalized people in the business world through positive representation and giving them a voice enables these minorities to build stronger self-confidence and resilience. It could even enable them to challenge the status quo and provide their own insights into the ethical issues that affect them (Alm & Guttormsen, 2021). According to the research participants, positive representation can also reinforce desirable behaviours and attitudes. In addition, positive representation is directly correlated with a person's levels of self-confidence. According to one of the psychologists interviewed in the context of Cyprus, the greater the positive representation of a group there is, the greater the self-confidence of the individuals belonging to that group becomes. One of the research participants from the national context of Romania, for instance, stated the following:

> *"[…] Usually, when you see people similar to yourself, you want to identify with them and in that way build greater self-confidence."*

Another research participant, a psychologist from Cyprus, suggested that, according to behavioural psychology, individuals learn and reinforce behaviours through imitation and positive reinforcement. Therefore, widely accepted positive examples that are applauded by the whole community can boost marginalised groups' self-confidence and motivation in their endeavours in a specific field, which also applies to entrepreneurship.

*Group membership, identity, and a sense of belonging*

According to some of the psychologists interviewed, being represented in groups is crucial for marginalised individuals as it provides comfort, empowerment, and a sense of not being alone in their endeavours. The research participants also suggested that when marginalised groups are positively represented, they may develop a sense of group identity, which can lead to greater self-confidence. One of the research participants from Cyprus additionally highlighted the following:

> "Group representation provides comfort and empowerment, helping individuals realise they are not alone in their experiences".

Similarly, one of the research participants in Romania stated the following about the importance of group membership and representation:

*"(…) And this will have a positive impact for, I think, the entire community of marginalised people […], because they will feel like there's a group membership and that people like them, you know, can climb up the success."*

In a sense, group representation and membership can help these individuals realise that they are instead accompanied by other people belonging to their marginalised communities, who make successful entrepreneurial ventures against the odds. This realization, achieved through identification, can potentially empower marginalised groups, and boost their motivation and self-belief.

*Overcoming the impostor syndrome*

According to some of the psychologists interviewed, positive representation can also help individuals assert themselves in society and overcome the internalized feelings of exploitation, as well as impostor syndrome.

One of the psychologists interviewed in the national context of Spain elaborated on how the impostor syndrome operates. According to the interviewee, the impostor syndrome is more relate to success than to failure, and it tends to be more intensely present in women than in men. It affects success because people have in mind different role models of what they consider successful. According to this psychologist, when comparing oneself to those role models, one may feel like in the verge of an abyss. This happens because people may have idealized the concept of success or that of a 'hero' as the person who never fears, doubts or fails, and that, as the interviewee emphasized, is far from the truth. So, the impostor syndrome, as the research participant from Spain explained, entails that, when people reach success, they still think of themselves as that fearful or doubtful person during the process, even when they achieve success.

Therefore, being represented as a self-possessed person with authority gives individuals a voice and empowers them, helping them in overcoming any negative feelings they may have developed associated with the impostor syndrome, such as self-doubt, anxiety, and depression.

*Identification with positive role models*
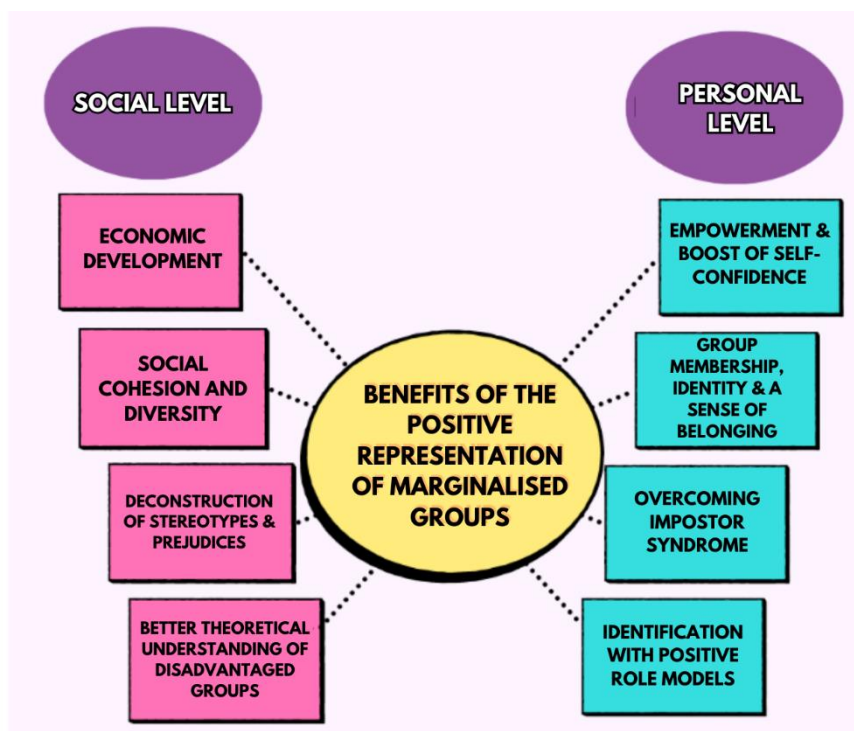


*Source: EH Project created with Canva*

## 7.2 The importance of promoting positive role models for marginalised groups

Research findings on entrepreneurship education prove the beneficial impact of incorporating successful entrepreneurial role models. Boldureanu et al. (2020) suggest that entrepreneurship education based on successful entrepreneurial role models can positively influence students' entrepreneurial tendencies and intentions and lead to a higher orientation level of students' perception towards the social benefits of entrepreneurship compared to the economic advantages. Nevertheless, despite the importance and benefits of having positive role models, people from disadvantaged communities tend to have fewer professional, cultural, gender and other role models. This makes it harder for these people to acknowledge themselves and their community's contribution in any field of social, creative, and economic life (Kondo, 2018).

On an individual level, the positive representation of underrepresented groups in entrepreneurship is a gesture that is both comforting and empowering for entrepreneurs belonging to marginalised social groups. Such representation enables aspiring or early-career disadvantaged entrepreneurs to find points of identification between them and the role models coming from their own communities. According to one of the entrepreneurship experts interviewed from the Greek national context, this identification with successful entrepreneurs who come from similarly disadvantaged backgrounds also helps minorities by providing them with measurable goals, practical examples, and concrete steps which they can follow towards success:

> *"It helps a lot, for sure. You have a goal, you know how far you can take it, you know what you need to build, you follow the steps of the person who has succeeded, and you know what steps you need to take. It doesn't seem like a pipe dream, you know, realistically grounded, that you're going to do one, two, three".*

The interviewee also suggested that identification with role models can also give disadvantaged groups the opportunity to adjust their individual steps according to their specific situations and evaluate or correct them accordingly.

Moreover, the representation of often-neglected groups of people in specific fields, including entrepreneurship, contributes significantly to the flourishment of these fields. Kondo (2018) highlights the great importance of positive representation for individuals who belong to disadvantaged communities, suggesting that it is crucial that their activity is reflected in the public sphere and their cultural environment. Equally significant, according to Kondo (2018) is that disadvantaged groups of people also have active role models in their fields who come from their own communities, and who can inspire, guide, and advise them. The beneficial function of promoting positive role models for disadvantaged groups of entrepreneurs is also highlighted in the OECD report by Kokkinaki et al. (2020). More specifically, the authors suggest that it would be beneficial if responsible authorities launched awareness-raising campaigns promoting role models, success stories, and networking opportunities for disadvantaged groups such as women or the youth, to increase the appeal of entrepreneurship as a possible career path (Kokkinaki et al., 2020).

The great importance of the availability of role models for marginalized groups of entrepreneurs has also been reflected in the data derived from the interviews with sociologists, psychologists, and entrepreneurship experts. The experts interviewed by the consortium agree that positive representation is very important for marginalized groups since it can offer these people role models to identify with. On the one hand, the research participants overall agree that positive representation is closely related to self-confidence. They suggest that when individuals feel positively represented and valued, they tend to have higher levels of self-confidence. Additionally, one of the participants emphasizes the importance of model learning, where individuals replicate the behaviours of those they see as successful. According to this psychologist, this can be especially motivating for people who lack self-belief. In addition, as one of the interviewees suggested, when people see other people with characteristics or backgrounds like theirs achieving success, it can be empowering and lead to greater self-confidence.

The research participant stated the following:

> *"I believe that if you have a positive representation of marginalized groups, their inclusion in the entrepreneurship world will be easier. And this will have a positive impact for, I think the entire community of marginalized people […], because they will feel like there's a group membership and that people like them, you know, can climb up the success ladder".*

A concrete, positive role model coming from a disadvantaged background was provided by one of the entrepreneurship experts in the Netherlands, who mentioned the example of Yiannis Antetokounmpo – a Greek basketball player of Nigerian origin. According to the interviewee, Antetokounmpo is a person who had come from a completely marginalised background, but now currently serves as a role model and a positive example for many young people across Europe and the globe, changing the way people see individuals with migrant biographies. There are many bright examples of people from marginalised or underrepresented communities succeeding and being promoted as role models in a variety of fields. Therefore, the field of entrepreneurship should also positively represent and promote its own bright examples of disadvantaged individuals who can potentially serve as entrepreneurial role models for their own communities.

## 7.3 Towards the positive representation of minorities in Entrepreneurship

### 7.3.1 The importance of self-perception and positive self-presentation

Another important aspect regarding the representation of marginalised groups in various fields of social activity, entrepreneurship included, is their self-representation. How people from disadvantaged backgrounds see and represent themselves often seems to influence their overall representation in particular fields; positive self-representation tends to ensure better positions for marginalized groups (Chowdhury, 2021). Chowdhury (2021) makes some recommendations about the inclusion of marginalised groups and their search for higher morals and representations, including the following:

• Firstly, marginalised groups should try to search for self-consciousness and higher morals despite their vulnerabilities. When a sense of self-consciousness is achieved, they can deploy it to represent themselves positively.

• Secondly, when marginalised groups represent themselves, they can direct powerful actors to participate in formal dialogues and protests either on their terms or on their behalf.

• It is also vital for disadvantaged groups to develop a solid understanding of their social positioning, rather than simply reacting based on false stimuli perpetuated by powerful actors who aim to control them.

In essence, Chowdhury (2021) suggests that marginalised groups must use non-traditional tactics to create opportunities and achieve their goals in collaboration with other social actors. This would show that these people are interested in leveraging strategic resources that give them access to policy mechanisms (Chowdhury, 2021).

Therefore, entrepreneurship is a challenging field for individuals belonging to underrepresented communities. Individuals belonging to disadvantaged communities, such as female entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs with ethnic backgrounds (including immigrant entrepreneurs), LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs with disabilities and those who are disadvantaged in other ways indeed face multiple obstacles in entrepreneurship daily. Despite these challenges, they still manage to take steps towards improving the conditions of their employment and their living conditions. People from disadvantaged communities often

prove that origins or status do not determine entrepreneurial ability (Alm & Guttormsen, 2021). Many people belonging to minorities are live examples proving that having a strong will, strong intentions and certain positive traits are more important than social status or background for entrepreneurial success.

## 7.4 Highlighting the potential of disadvantaged groups of entrepreneurs – Examples

### 7.4.1 Ethnic minority/immigrant entrepreneurs

Research suggests that ethnic minorities are more prone to concentrate on specific ethnic minority group-provided markets, products, support structures and specific forms of entrepreneurship (European Commission, 2015). The undertaking of the migrants' path already proves traits of initiative, resilience and risk-taking, so, if combined with the appropriate support services, it would give marginalised communities a chance to overcome the barriers presented in their way (European Commission, 2015).

The literature on entrepreneurship in Cyprus has paid attention to the important issue of (im)migration and its impact on the country's entrepreneurial landscape, given that the country has been an attractive destination for many (im)migrants over the past decades.

Some studies conducted on the Cypriot context reveal some interesting insights into the state of immigrant entrepreneurship in Cyprus (Violaris, Loizides, & Harmandas, 2011; Violaris Harmandas & Loizides, 2012). They also contribute towards constructing a positive image of immigrant entrepreneurs, especially of women. The earlier article by Violaris, Loizides, and Harmandas (2011) historically traces the entrepreneurial activity of immigrants in Cyprus and provides an overview of how it favourably evolved. It was written during a financially prosperous period for Cyprus in 2012 and outlines the positive role entrepreneurship played in the flourishment of the country's economy in the years that preceded its publication. It particularly highlighted the positive contribution of immigrants in the bustling Greek-Cypriot entrepreneurial landscape of the time. The article also calls attention to the benefits deriving from the locals' welcoming stance towards foreign investment for the Cypriot economy (Violaris Harmandas & Loizides, 2012). A common point in both articles is that, during the period that preceded their publication, the Cyprus government was particularly encouraging toward immigrant entrepreneurial activity offering ample opportunities to immigrant entrepreneurs. Both articles also highlight the beneficial impact this governmental stance had on the country's overall economy ((Violaris, Loizides, & Harmandas, 2011Thus; Violaris, Harmandas & Loizides, 2012). Therefore, many of the remarks made in these articles achieve conveying a very positive image of immigrant entrepreneurs in Cyprus.

### 7.4.2 Female entrepreneurs

Much of the literature on entrepreneurship focuses on women as an underrepresented social group and the attempts that have been made towards their visibility and inclusion. In the case of women entrepreneurs, research has found that the combination of being a woman and having an ethnic minority status is successful in entrepreneurship, as these women's outsider status can potentially develop socially conscious business practices that benefit their

communities (Godwyn & Stoddart, 2011). This pattern tends to repeat itself and bend more towards social justice and community benefit (Godwyn & Stoddart, 2011).

An example of the valuable contribution of female entrepreneurs to the prosperity of their communities is revealed by a study published by Ertac and Tanova (2020) conducted in the context of Northern Cyprus. The study highlights the positive impact of female entrepreneurship in the sustainable tourism sector and is the first to address the example of flourishing women ecotourism entrepreneurs in rural Northern Cyprus. Ertac and Tanova (2020) note the significant increase in both numbers and activity of women entrepreneurs venturing into this sector, despite the frozen political conflict on the island and the existing patriarchal social structures. The positive contribution of female entrepreneurs to the local economy is also highlighted (Ertac & Tanova, 2020). In a similar vein, the authors suggest that the tourism sector itself, in a reciprocal way, constitutes a promising "route through which women can be integrated into economic and social life" (Ertac & Tanova, 2020, p. 5). Considering that the populations inhabiting the Northern regions of Cyprus tend to suffer from additional social marginalization (Ertac & Tanova, 2020), the findings of this study further contribute to constructing a positive image of these disadvantaged women entrepreneurs in the entrepreneurship landscape of Cyprus.

## 7.5. Towards the positive representation of women and other marginalised groups in entrepreneurship – Examples of initiatives from the Consortium's national contexts

One of the areas investigated via interviews conducted by the consortium with entrepreneurship experts is that of national or local examples of initiatives related to entrepreneurship. The interviewees were asked to share any examples of unconventional or inclusive entrepreneurship initiatives led by women or marginalized groups they are aware of in their national contexts. In addition, they were asked to provide their insights on local formal initiatives supporting women and other marginalized entrepreneurs in each country, and how these initiatives can become more effective.

### 7.5.1 Examples of Unconventional or inclusive Entrepreneurship initiatives led by women

In the context of the interviews conducted by the consortium with experts on entrepreneurship, the research participants were asked to provide local examples of unconventional entrepreneurship initiatives led by women. Some of the initiatives they elaborated on include the following examples:

#### Romania

One of the experts interviewed in Romania provided an example of their own social enterprise named "OILRIGHT", which collects used cooking oil and involves persons with disabilities in the collection process. The waste is then transformed into scented candles, and some of it is used to produce greener fuel. This is an excellent example of positive representation in action.

By actively involving persons with disabilities in the collection process and showcasing their abilities and contributions, this enterprise is not only positively representing marginalized groups but also contributing to a more sustainable and eco-friendly society. More information about this project can be found at www.oilright.ro.

However, it is important to note that positive representation is not enough on its own. The research participants from Romania also suggested that there need to be concrete initiatives and support structures in place to empower marginalized entrepreneurs and make business support programs accessible to them.

### *Cyprus*

Two of the entrepreneurship experts in the Cypriot context discussed four examples of entrepreneurship initiatives in Cyprus catering to specific ethnic communities. These initiatives include a young woman of Asian origin selling breakfast to people of the same ethnicity near the bus station where they hang out, a young Nigerian woman baking traditional Nigerian bread and distributing it to shops that serve both people from her community and locals, a Chinese doctor (male) who opened his own medical office specialising in acupuncture, and a Chinese restaurant owned by a female immigrant. These initiatives are bright examples of how entrepreneurs with ethnic backgrounds can undertake niche marketing to foster their inclusion within their local communities while also incorporating their cultural practices and products in the local markets.

Two other entrepreneurship experts from Cyprus, who are active female entrepreneurs, drew from their own personal involvement in unconventional forms of entrepreneurship. One of the two women explained how she perceives her own venture: the creation of an innovative mobile app named "INSAVIOR" (https://insavior.com/), which aims at creating a community of solidarity among women where they can reach out for help whenever they feel they are in danger. As she explained, she believes that what makes hers an unconventional idea is that it was materialised for women, by women, and that the mobile application she developed is one of its kind in the broader context of Greece and Cyprus.

### *Greece*

One of the entrepreneurship experts interviewed in Greece contrasted female and male entrepreneurs, expressing the opinion that women entrepreneurs have greater sensitivity and are usually more empathetic. The interviewee also suggested that female entrepreneurs tend to promote inclusion to a greater extent than their male counterparts. She stated the following:

> *"Inclusion is probably more of a concern to them than to a male entrepreneur."*

To illustrate why she believes this, she cited as an example three businesses led by women in the context of Greece, who are committed to the inclusion of disadvantaged groups and minorities. One of them is a partnership business employing people with autism, whose task is to prepare cereal bars. The other entrepreneurial initiative is a café employing people with

autism, while the third business is a botanical mix business in Thrace, Greece, which employs people who belong to minority groups.

*Spain*

Another program mentioned by one of the entrepreneurship experts interviewed in Spain is the ADELANTE program (https://adelante-empresas.castillalamancha.es/), running in the Castilla la Mancha region in Spain. As the interviewee explained, it is a program which supports aspiring entrepreneurs with financing (through microcredit loans) and consultancy, as well as with the creation or consolidation of new enterprises in the region. She also noted that this initiative has a special focus on initiatives undertaken in rural areas.

*The Netherlands*

The experts interviewed in the national context of the Netherlands pointed out some initiatives undertaken by public institutions and organisations in the country focusing specifically on female entrepreneurship. These include various seminars and webinar sessions that attempt to promote and aid women who face difficulties in entrepreneurship and are reluctant to take risks. The experts from the Netherlands also highlighted the importance of using social media in the field of entrepreneurship as a tool of advertisement.

### 7.5.2 Formal Initiatives for the promotion of entrepreneurship among women and other marginalized groups

The entrepreneurship experts were also asked about any initiatives available in their national contexts for the promotion of entrepreneurship among women and other disadvantaged groups. They explored questions regarding the characteristics these initiatives should have, their effectiveness, as well as other kinds of interventions that may be needed. Some of the interviewees referred to initiatives related to financial support, networking opportunities, mentoring programs, and awareness-raising campaigns, to mention a few. The following sub-sections reflect some of the main findings from the interviews:

*Need for the intervention of public institutions*

One of the experts interviewed in the context of the Netherlands highlighted the need for public institutions to intervene in the promotion of initiatives supporting marginalized entrepreneurs, particularly women. This expert, as also mentioned earlier, has acknowledged that there are initiatives in place, such as seminars and webinar sessions supporting women that are reluctant to take risks and make greater demands, but he regrets that these are not yet enough. According to him, there is still a huge demand and need for institutional measures that would aid female entrepreneurship. The expert suggested that public institutions should organize awareness-raising campaigns and seminars on inclusion in entrepreneurship that would promote the positive representation of women. Additionally, the interviewee suggested that extra motivation and initiatives must be given to women who are

marginalized. It is therefore important to frame official policies for positive representation of marginalized groups, policies that would be targeted and effective enough to compensate for their setbacks.

### *A targeted, tailored, and bottom-up approach*

Overall, most entrepreneurship experts interviewed emphasised that all programs should follow a bottom-up approach and that they should be tailored and respond to the real needs of their beneficiaries. For instance, an entrepreneurship expert from Spain noted that the responsible authorities should design programmes according to the specific needs of underrepresented communities and inform these people about the availability of programs suitable to them. Building on this view, one of the experts from the Spanish context expressed the following:

> *"Programs designed by institutions to boost women's entrepreneurship should have a bottom-up approach and a starting point that analyses their needs. We cannot have generalized programs for diverse entrepreneurship, as unconventional entrepreneurship is very diverse and so are the underrepresented profiles of the entrepreneurs. It's impossible for one program to target everything."*

Regarding initiatives that could be organized either by public institutions or civil society organizations (CSOs), some of the interviewees from Greece also emphasized the need for following a bottom-up approach. In this approach, the marginalized groups concerned could be actively involved in the design of the proposals and in decision-making procedures.

One of the experts from Cyprus pointed out that although there are programs in Cyprus to help women and youth, start businesses, they need to be more narrowly focused to ensure a better outcome. Generic requirements, such as being a young woman, do not guarantee success, and a more meaningful evaluation is needed to identify good ideas and capable people who can implement them. This would create an environment where applicants have a better chance of succeeding and build confidence among women in disadvantaged groups to create their businesses. The same expert also suggests that there should be more structured programs for trade unions and women's business organizations to cater to their numerous needs. Overall, these initiatives are crucial in empowering underrepresented groups, but they need to be more targeted to ensure maximum impact.

A concrete example of an initiative promoting entrepreneurship among disadvantaged groups through a tailored approach is one called "Entrepreneur without Borders", running in Germany (European Commission, 2015). This programme consists of a free-of-charge platform for mutual exchange, training offers and the strengthening of the local economy in Hamburg. It also to promotes start-up initiatives from immigrants and the participation of women in economic life (European Commission, 2015).

*Initiatives promoting female entrepreneurship*

It is worth noting that one of the female entrepreneurs interviewed was particularly optimistic about the progress made in Cyprus in the representation of female entrepreneurs. She believes that, over the past few years, the overall state of female entrepreneurship is gradually shifting towards a positive direction. She attributed this positive shift to the fact that female entrepreneurs have started being more assertive in their demands for equal rights and representation.

Another expert on entrepreneurship interviewed in Cyprus highlighted the need for initiatives promoting female entrepreneurship. The interviewee emphasized that different kinds of initiatives by public institutions and/or CSOs are required to be taken because even though there is currently more representation of women in entrepreneurship, the women mainly represented are women from advantaged backgrounds. According to her, such initiatives are necessary to boost and positively represent marginalized women in the field of entrepreneurship. She suggests that those initiatives should be undertaken by other female entrepreneurs with similar experiences in the field of entrepreneurship and who can more appropriately guide other women:

> *"It is really important for all women, regardless of social class, financial status etc., to provide them with the necessary means to enable them to materialize their dreams, ideas and plans, but not in a generalized way. This should be done by other women who have personally experienced similar situations and have themselves started from a low background so that they have the perception and empathy to be able to really help other marginalised women."*

As this expert suggests, these experienced women entrepreneurs could function as mentors for aspiring or early-career women entrepreneurs, since they also have the benefit of personal experience. Other helpful programs mentioned by the experts from the Spanish context are those that provide initiatives such as "women's circles", which function as empowerment and support groups.

## 7.6 Conclusion

⇒ Explored the positive representation of marginalized groups in entrepreneurship.
⇒ Aimed to highlight the valuable and dynamic role of minorities in the field.
⇒ Examined social and personal benefits of positive representation, including dismantling stereotypes, economic development, social cohesion, diversity, empowerment, and a sense of identity.
⇒ Emphasized the significance of positive role models for marginalized groups and their impact on self-confidence.
⇒ Acknowledged the potential of entrepreneurs from disadvantaged backgrounds.

⇒ Recognized the significant contributions of marginalized individuals in entrepreneurship.

⇒ Highlighted the role of self-perception and positive self-presentation in the advancement of marginalized entrepreneurs.

⇒ Presented examples of initiatives in the consortium's national contexts to support marginalized groups, especially women entrepreneurs.

⇒ Discussed characteristics and needs of formal initiatives for promoting entrepreneurship among women and disadvantaged groups.

⇒ Stressed the importance of involving public institutions, adopting tailored approaches, and systematically involving women in entrepreneurship.

⇒ Derived insights from interviews with entrepreneurship experts.

## 8. Overview of women that belong to underrepresented communities

### 8.1 Women-led Initiative Landscape

Our society has gone through incredible events in the last years. We are witnesses of how technology has revolutionized the way we relate and make business - we went through a global pandemic that was followed by a worldwide economic crisis, to be followed by a war, to be followed by an energy and food crisis (GEM 2022). In this whirlwind of events, women led-businesses have been challenged, shown resilience and proved that they can grasp the opportunities presented by chaos and change, create added value and profit to the economies. However, cultural, structural and financial support remains inadequate for entrepreneur women, even if there is a clear and robust business case to stir policymakers and investors into action (GEM 2022).

What is the women-led initiative landscape in light of the above-mentioned events? Here are some facts and figures to keep in mind: What do the previously mentioned facts mean for women's empowerment? Is this one of the turning points where imbalance starts? Where maternity leave becomes an added cost for companies, or it is not cost-effective to secure the position?

According to the United Nations, there are two main areas in these issues; policy and education related to parenting:



Source: https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1w/k1wesie03d
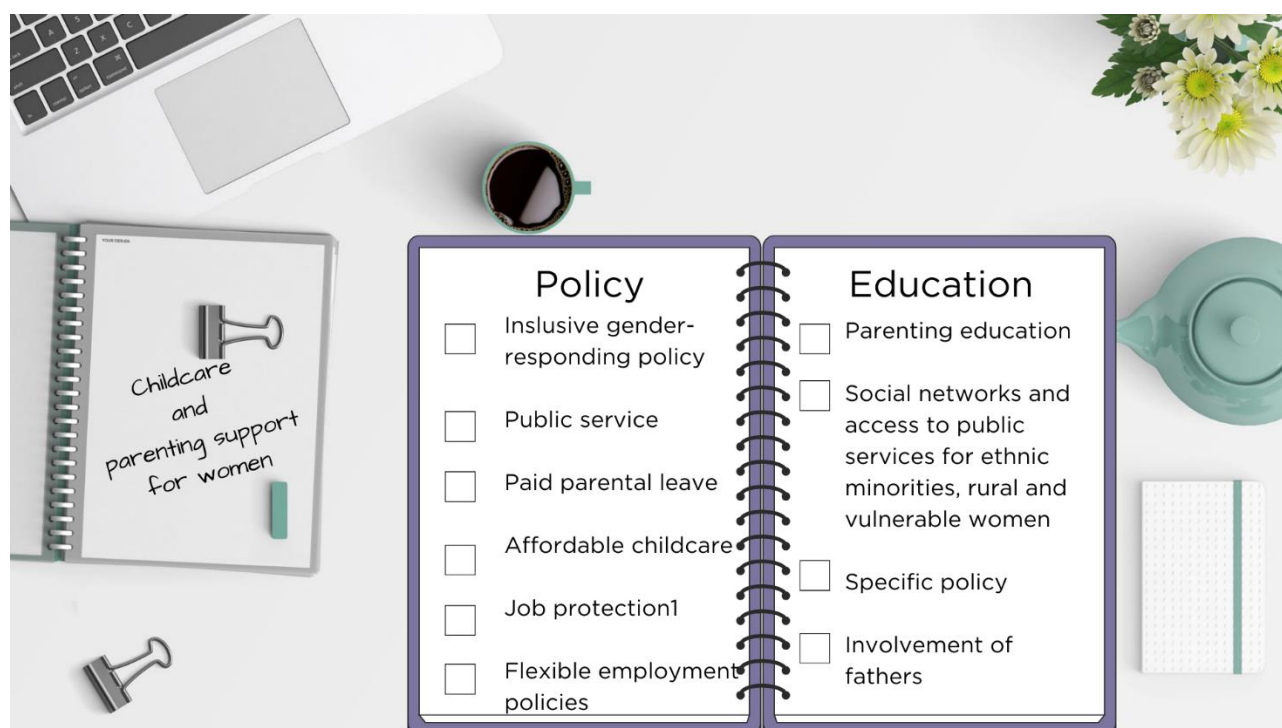
Sharaban (2019) also suggests that some of the steps can be taken to balance the empowerment of women such as the enhancement of work-family support and enrichment mechanism, the enforcement of women's rights through public institutions and policies, and the effective delegation of personal responsibilities.

In the case of marginalized communities and ethnicities, representation is even lower or non-existent. If women's voices are not heard, and they do not serve as inspiration and as role models to other aspiring entrepreneurs, the trend will not be sustainable (Allen, 2022). And if we want to take this to the society level, if some ethnicities do not recognize themselves as mirrored in the public sphere, how will they know to realize the full potential of what they can become professionally, culturally etc.? (Kondo, 2018).

It is not uncommon for migrant or women living in Europe to be engaged in the family business, however their role and contribution is quite invisible for society and research alike. The paper by Vershena et al. (2019) finds that these patriarchal-rooted dynamics are replicated across the generations and cause women to be considered as illiterate, uneducated, passive, lacking skills and social capital, thus placing them in the position of the non-paid helper rather than that of an entrepreneur.

Studies have shown that women (and even more women coming from disadvantaged backgrounds)  face unique challenges when they endeavour in entrepreneurship: entrepreneurship-related challenges (inadequate early financing, limited access to training and mentoring, lack of established business networks, non-formal education and experience etc.), relevant knowledge and skills, social/cultural factors (household responsibilities such as motherhood, cultural unconscious bias, discrimination based on gender, reconciliation between family and professional life ,among others (Fleisher & Marquez 2019; Ogundana et al., 2021; Barr 2015; Edman & Punkari, 2021). However, the above-mentioned challenges as well along with the issue of lack of representation have been addressed and improved by the advances in technology and digitalization which have promoted and generated new role models, networks, and better communication and innovation in entrepreneurial fields (Edman & Punkari, 2021). For instance, these advantages enable women to work from home, have online meetings (which helps the reconciliation of professional life with early years of motherhood) and also creates networks and opportunities for participation in mentoring groups and online communities where they can exchange knowledge, know-how and solutions to entrepreneurship problems.

In the cases where there are programs designed to boost or incentivize the entrepreneurship intentions and/or capacities of women from underprivileged communities, they lack awareness (as the information often does not reach them), mentoring and also role models who act as decision-maker in these areas. One study found that classroom training aimed at women from disadvantaged backgrounds combined with student peer-mentoring gave results in reported increased perceptions of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, greater awareness of diversity and gender issues, and a changed perspective on problem-solving and life in general (Mavripilis et al., 2020). The same study insisted on the gender-sensitive approach to entrepreneurship education programs (Mavripilis et al., (2020). Gender-sensitive programs

take gender into account in every step of the process, from the definition of the problem to the definition of policy (Warnecke, 2016).

When it comes to a more disadvantaged profile such as that migrant women in entrepreneurship, it must be taken into consideration that much has changed in the recent years including the way they migrate (independently instead of family unification), the multiple layers of intersectional discrimination they face in the countries of arrival, the lack of respect of their rights and the life-stories they bring with them (Heinrich, 2018). Therefore, any interventions or policy that aims at promoting the socio-economic inclusion of migrant women or enhancing their entrepreneurship capacities would be inefficient if it weren't gender-sensitive or if it didn't take into consideration the challenges and hardships they face.

## 8.2 Intersectionality and barriers

Women have historically faced more barriers than men in entering the public sphere, or high management or responsibility positions, and the more male-dominated the sector, the more challenging the entry. The political domain is one good example. Shierly and Keithly (2010) observed that some of the encountered barriers were society-imposed and some were self-imposed by women:
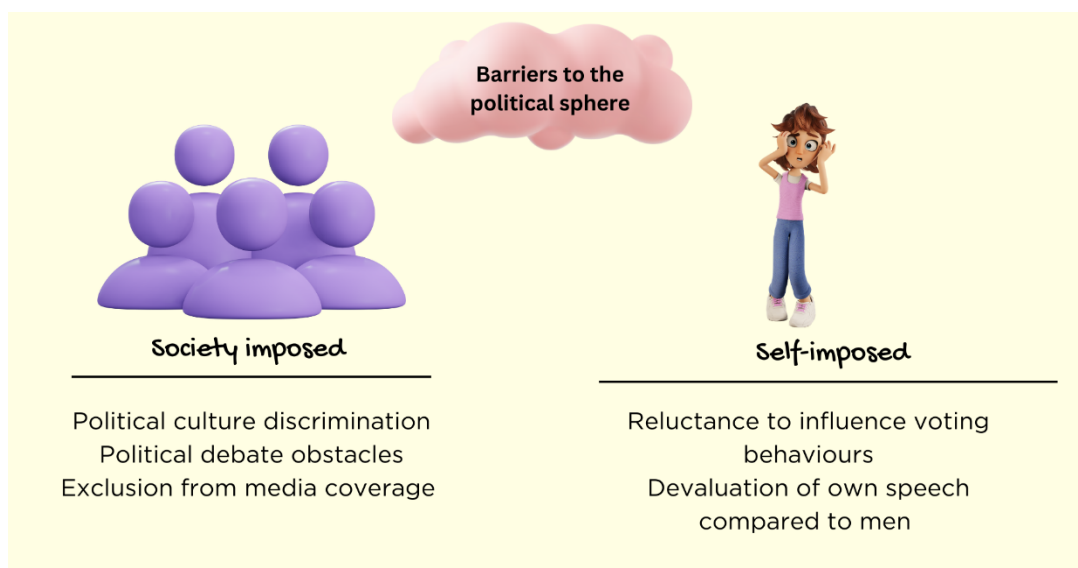


*Source: Shierly and Keithly, 2010*

All the interviewees who participated in the EH project, unanimously agreed that access to resources and financing is much more difficult for women (especially for women who come from disadvantaged backgrounds). This case exacerbates when women coming from disadvantaged backgrounds are located in rural areas and oftentimes are not fully integrated into small communities with a more fixed mindset. This scenario is especially detrimental for the rural areas as they suffer from severe depopulation and brain drain and particularly miss out on the undeniable advantages that diversity brings to entrepreneurship and to society as a whole (Fleisher & Marquez, 2019).

One of the most common cases of self-employment for women coming from ethnic minorities and immigrant communities is to be included in the family businesses where the relations are patriarchal, unequal, replicated across generations and causing a vision of women being passive, illiterate, passive, low-skilled and of underrated social capital (Verneshina & Rodgers, 2019).

## 8.3 Conclusion

⟹ Recent societal events and challenges have shed light on the progress and enduring barriers faced by women-led initiatives.

⟹ Women-led businesses have displayed resilience and adaptability in response to technological advancements, economic disruptions, and global crises.

⟹ Despite their ability to navigate change, women entrepreneurs continue to encounter cultural, structural, and financial obstacles.

⟹ Addressing these challenges is crucial, as there is a compelling business case for policymakers and investors to take action.

⟹ Women's empowerment is at a critical juncture, with policy and education related to work-family balance being key areas of concern.

⟹ The underrepresentation of marginalized communities and ethnicities, including women, threatens progress and untapped potential in both professional and cultural realms.

# 9. Intersectional lens in entrepreneurship

## 9.1 Intersectionality and the Field of Entrepreneurship

'Intersectionality' is an analytical framework developed to understand how social identities may give ground to different modes of discrimination and privilege. Intersectionality as a lens of analysis is applied in various fields as the acknowledgement that everyone has unique experiences of discrimination. According to Dy and Agwunobi (2021), "*people are subject to the effects of multiple social categories or identities at once*" (p. 1730), including race, gender, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, age, and physical ability. Thus, the notion of intersectionality urges us to consider the effects of the interaction between disadvantaged social categories that may marginalise people in their intersections. Understanding or acknowledging intersectionality is essential when discussing the inclusion of marginalised groups in entrepreneurship. Its introduction in research on entrepreneurship helps better describe the complex structure of opportunities and constraints that minority entrepreneurs are embedded into (Vorobeva, 2022).

This chapter will explore the theoretical framework of intersectionality and how it applies to entrepreneurship. It has been informed by a literature review on entrepreneurship. It has also been enriched with findings from interviews conducted with psychologists, sociologists, and entrepreneurship experts by the consortium in the five national contexts of the partner organisations (Spain, Greece, Cyprus, Romania, and the Netherlands). The first section of the chapter will discuss intersectional discrimination and disadvantages in minority entrepreneurship. It will address the challenges faced by disadvantaged entrepreneurs with intersectional identities, mainly focusing on the unique hardships that female entrepreneurs encounter. Then, the chapter will provide some insights into actions and initiatives that can be undertaken to support entrepreneurs with intersectional identities, especially women. The following section will investigate how people with intersectional identities can overcome the additional challenges they face due to their intersecting disadvantages. Attention will be given to the significance of networking processes, community support, solidarity, and the psychological dimension based on perspectives of failure and success. Finally, the chapter will consider the opportunities that arise from adopting an intersectional lens in entrepreneurship. It will explore how intersectionality can contribute to resilience and how entrepreneurs can leverage their intersectional identities to turn disadvantages into privileges.

## 9.2 Intersectional Discrimination and Disadvantage in Entrepreneurship

The recent literature on inclusive entrepreneurship produced in the EU context shows that there has been an emerging interest in examining minority entrepreneurship, discrimination, and inclusion. Growing attention has been paid to issues of participation and visibility of women and other marginalised people with intersectional identities in entrepreneurship. The concept of intersectionality refers to the complex ways in which various social identities, such as race, gender, and sexuality, intersect and interact with each other to shape a person's

experiences and opportunities (Vorobeva, 2022). The literature on inclusive entrepreneurship also acknowledges the fact that different intersections of disadvantaged identities multiply the challenges that entrepreneurs with these identities face (Opara et al., 2020; Vorobeva, 2022; Lassalle, 2011; Aydin et al., 2019; Jubany, Güell, & Davis, 2011; Cody, 2017; Verduijn & Essers, 2013).

Verduijn and Essers (2013) argue that dominant assumptions regarding entrepreneurship often overlook the challenges faced by people with intersectional identities and assume that all entrepreneurs have equal access to resources and opportunities. To address these challenges, the authors recommend attempting a more nuanced understanding of entrepreneurship that pays attention to the experiences of marginalised groups (Verduijn & Essers, 2013). This requires shifting the dominant discourse on entrepreneurship and recognising the importance of diversity and inclusion in the entrepreneurship ecosystem (Verduijn & Essers, 2013).

People from disadvantaged backgrounds typically face additional obstacles while navigating the field of entrepreneurship, creating unique experiences of discrimination. In the article "Intersectionality and Minority Entrepreneurship: At the Crossroad of Vulnerability and Power," Vorobeva (2022) explores the concept of intersectionality as it applies to minority entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs from minority social groups experience multiple disadvantages and often fall victim to intersectional discrimination. Their disadvantaged identities and backgrounds combined make their participation and advancement in entrepreneurship an even more challenging endeavor. Therefore, intersectionality is a crucial framework for understanding the experiences of minority entrepreneurs, who often face multiple layers of discrimination and marginalisation (Vorobeva, 2022; Opara, Sealy & Ryan, 2020).

### 9.2.1 Challenges Faced by Disadvantaged Entrepreneurs with Intersectional Identities

This sub-section addresses the situations of some disadvantaged groups of people whose intersecting identities render them more vulnerable in the world of enterprise. It provides insights into the experiences of people with intersecting identities regarding physical ability and age.

People with disabilities (PwD) have been a disadvantaged group facing multiple social and economic life barriers, including advancement in entrepreneurship. Literature and research on inclusive entrepreneurship have recognised previous gaps regarding the exclusion of people with disabilities from entrepreneurship. Drakopoulou Dodd and Keles (2014), focusing on the EU level, highlight this gap in both literature and policy since they find the emerging area of inclusive entrepreneurship lacking for PwD. Acknowledging the vital role networking plays in enhancing the participation of disadvantaged groups, Drakopoulou Dodd and Keles (2014) emphasise the need for initiatives aimed at networking PwD. The need to address the disadvantaged situation of PwD in entrepreneurship is also expressed in the report by Kokkinaki et al. (2020), which includes a special section dedicated to entrepreneurial support for PwD as a new area of attention.

The impact of the factor of age also highlights the importance of adopting an intersectional lens. Age, especially old age, is widely recognised as a significant additional impediment for mature-aged or senior entrepreneurs (Drakopoulou Dodd & Keles, 2014; Kokkinaki et al., 2020; Aydin et al., 2019). Aydin et al. (2019) address the gap in the literature regarding senior entrepreneurs ('seniorpreneurs'). The authors underline the importance of adopting an intersectional stance in entrepreneurship that recognises not only age but also gender and other determining factors that could negatively impact entrepreneurs, including ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, physical ability, and religion (Aydin et al., 2019). The article also discusses the example of senior female entrepreneurs who face additional obstacles due to an intersection of age, race, and gender particularities (Aydin et al., 2019). Some of the research participants interviewed have also expressed the significance of the factor of age. One of the experts on entrepreneurship from Cyprus expressed concerns regarding age as it affects the youth. She highlighted its effects on gaining professional experience, which works somewhat unfavourably in the case of young entrepreneurs.

The field of academia and academic entrepreneurship is also affected by intersections of disadvantaged identities, particularly when it comes to gender. According to Mickey and Smith-Doerr (2022), research reveals that there are 'gender' and 'race' gaps in academic entrepreneurship and patenting, creating longstanding inequities among people with intersecting identities in this field. Regarding academia, Rainey et al. (2018) also found that female university students of colour are the least likely to report a sense of belonging in the STEM fields. This intersection of gender and race, therefore, proves to impact these female students' self-perceptions and their future professional advancement in these fields. Additionally, according to Rainey et al. (2018), entrepreneurship students from underrepresented groups are less likely to feel they belong. This highlights the structural and cultural features of universities that continue to privilege the archetypal figure of the white male entrepreneur (Rainey et al., 2018).

### 9.2.2 Unique Challenges Faced by Female Entrepreneurs with Intersectional Identities

Migrant women and women of colour are unique examples of individuals whose intersectional identities subject them to additional, unique challenges in entrepreneurship. The combination of being a woman entrepreneur while also being a black woman or a woman with a migrant biography seems to create additional layers of obstacles (Cody, 2017; Opara et al., 2020; Verduijn & Essers, 2013). Cody (2017) examines the impact of racial and gender discrimination on women's ability to create and sustain an enterprise. For instance, black women often experience both gender and racial discrimination when they attempt to access business support (Cody, 2017).

In a similar vein, Lassalle's (2021) findings show that women migrant entrepreneurs can sometimes be trailing wives, something which constrains their agency and their ability to program their daily lives, something which impacts their entrepreneurial activity. To advance the intersectional agenda in entrepreneurship research and policymaking, it is essential first

to highlight the specific issues faced by entrepreneurs situated at the intersection of the oppressive structures of patriarchy and exclusion (Lassalle, 2021).

Data from the interviews with the research participants show that women entrepreneurs with intersectional identities face many additional challenges. These can vary depending on their background and vulnerability and can arise from cultural barriers, such as traditional gender roles and patriarchal societies (Cody, 2017). One of the entrepreneurship experts interviewed in the context of Greece characterised motherhood as a situation that constitutes a unique challenge for female entrepreneurs. Another interviewee suggested that these challenges can be community-specific, faced by particular social groups such as migrants or Roma communities. These challenges can manifest in different ways, such as limited access to initiatives and public programs due to inaccessible language or pressure to conform to traditional family values. One of the research participants from Romania also added that migrant women entrepreneurs face additional challenges when accessing initiatives and public programs mainly because the language used is inaccessible to them.

## 9.3 Support for entrepreneurs with intersectional identities and female entrepreneurs: Actions & Initiatives

On an EU policy level, various attempts have been made to address the exclusion or underrepresentation of certain groups from the field of enterprise. Drakopoulou Dodd and Keles (2014) offer an overview of such EU policy interventions that have been made to enhance the entrepreneurial success of disadvantaged groups. There are also several concrete examples of EU public policy initiatives, both on a regional/national and European/cross-national level (Drakopoulou Dodd & Keles, 2014). Verduijn and Essers (2013) highlight the potential benefits of supporting minority groups in entrepreneurship, particularly addressing the case of female ethnic minority entrepreneurs. According to the authors, these entrepreneurs can bring unique perspectives and ideas to the entrepreneurship ecosystem, leading to innovation and economic growth (Verduijn & Essers, 2013).

All research participants interviewed agreed on the belief that to support women entrepreneurs with intersectional identities, it is essential to acknowledge and address the unique challenges they face. Technology can be a valuable ally in promoting female entrepreneurship, especially among women with intersectional identities. It has the potential to increase access to entrepreneurship education and training, provide resources and networks to women entrepreneurs, and address gender-based discrimination in the entrepreneurship ecosystem (Orser, Riding & Li, 2019). The research participants highlighted the significant contribution that business associations can make to promote support, primarily through online initiatives. One of the entrepreneurship experts from Romania gave an example of local business associations such as "Women in Business Romania" (www.afar.ro). This expert believes that such business associations can play a vital role in providing support through education, scholarships, and access to different programs. Another example provided by two research participants interviewed in Greece is the organisation

"Women on Top" (https://womenontop.gr/), which supports the full range of women in all areas through mentoring programs.

Vorobeva (2022) suggests that policymakers should design tailored support mechanisms to address the needs of individuals located at the most disempowering intersections of gender, class, and race. The need for tailored support mechanisms has also been reflected in the interviews with the research participants. A research participant from the national context of Romania pointed out that the programs are designed to support female entrepreneurs with intersectional identities in a tailored manner. According to this expert, language is one of the elements that should be addressed. People creating support programmes should avoid using complex and sophisticated language to make the material accessible to all. This is a crucial factor to consider when migrant female entrepreneurs are concerned (Verduijn & Essers, 2013).

More specifically, the participant suggested the following about the initiatives and programmes supporting female entrepreneurs:

> "It uses a more accessible language, not so technical and avoids business jargon, which is scary. You know, easy-to-understand type of communication. That would be the first thing because many women when they see like a very, you know... Some words that are being used from the get-go, they think God, this is not for me. This is elite."

One of the psychologists interviewed in the national context of Cyprus made a case for adopting a context-specific approach to the issue and effects of intersectionality. She insisted that each country's case regarding the issue of intersectionality should be studied in its terms. This is because the challenges faced by disadvantaged communities and women with intersectional identities are genuinely unique in the other sense that the specificities of their context bind them. She stated the following:

> "I believe that it is wrong to take a country's data and assume that we can have the same predictions about what will happen in a different country because their histories are different, and their realities are different."

Therefore, any discussion about the challenges faced by people with intersectional identities or female entrepreneurs should be grounded on data from the specific context examined to avoid assumptions and generalisations.

## 9.4 Overcoming the Challenges of Intersectional Discrimination

A solution to overcome these challenges and create a more inclusive business environment is to deconstruct the traditional archetype of the entrepreneur through tailored support and by promoting diversity initiatives (Vorobeva, 2022). Recognising and valuing the unique perspectives and experiences of minority entrepreneurs enables society to level the entrepreneurial landscape and promote more equitable opportunities for success in entrepreneurship. To face and resist intersectional discrimination, it is also crucial for both the people who are discriminated against and overall society to comprehend the complex,

multilayered nature of this discrimination process (Jubany, Güell & Davies, 2011). Equally important is to acknowledge that there are several levels of intersectional discrimination. Jubany, Güell and Davies (2011) identify three levels of intersectional discrimination: the micro-level (when victims need to feel represented by the legal system), the meso-level (in which working organisations and their actors, such as legal advisors, are involved) and the macro-level (relating to the political framework and antidiscrimination issues). Comprehending the workings of intersectional discrimination on its different levels is an important first step towards eliminating it (Jubany, Güell & Davies, 2011).

There are several cases of women entrepreneurs belonging to different social groups (immigrants, mothers, women living in 'oppressive' regimes) who can find alternative, unconventional ways to overcome obstacles. Such an example comes from Ginting-Carlström and Chliova's (2022) research on low-class women entrepreneurs in the context of moderate Islam. Women in this context often find strategic ways to navigate patriarchal structures and engage in entrepreneurship despite the prevalence of conservative gender relations (Ginting-Carlström & Chliova, 2022). They manage this by strategically combining religious and cultural values to present their entrepreneurial activity as a respectable economic endeavour without posing a significant threat to the status quo (Ginting-Carlström & Chliova, 2022).

Lindvert, Patel, and Wincent (2017) examine the potential of female entrepreneurship in the context of Pakistan, discussing the household and family effects of women's entrepreneurial ventures. Even in such patriarchal environments, entrepreneurship often functions as a tool for women's emancipation, yielding economic and social benefits (Lindvert, Patel & Wincent, 2017). Meliou (2019) explores how female entrepreneurs mobilise familial resources to navigate the gendered challenges faced during Greece's financial crisis and austerity. Instead of being a debilitating factor, the family can potentially offer women entrepreneurs financial, logistical, or material support, revealing the transformative potential of family care (Meliou, 2019).

### 9.4.1 Significance of Networking, Community-support, and Solidarity

As discussed in Chapter 1, networking is as an essential procedure for empowering and advancing people from disadvantaged backgrounds in entrepreneurship. Drakopoulou Dodd and Keles (2014) highlight the benefits of expanding networking opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs belonging to disadvantaged social groups, considering the determining influences of factors such as sex/gender, ethnicity, (im)migration background, disability, age, and employment status (or intersections of them). Promoting networks and networking opportunities would therefore be very useful in empowering, connecting and creating a community of solidarity among disadvantaged people with intersectional identities.

Overall, the answers of the research participants interviewed by the consortium reflect the significance of networking and community-building actions for entrepreneurs with intersectional identities. Most interviewees emphasised the importance of community and building alliances through a human-centric approach to unconventional entrepreneurship. Some of them also celebrated the importance of these people sharing their experiences and

supporting one another through both positive and negative moments. One of the experts on entrepreneurship connected networking with empowerment: "*Networks [can] create a sense of empowerment.*"

According to this interviewee, these networks can create a sense of empowerment and understanding among individuals with similar identities or backgrounds, particularities, and experiences of oppression. In this sense, communities that recognise and value intersecting identities can also become spaces of empowerment, understanding, and social inclusion. These groups become spaces of empowerment also because in the case of challenges, solutions are suggested by other entrepreneur women who have been there before,

The experts on entrepreneurship interviewed by the consortium also believe that institutional and organisational support could contribute significantly to minimising the challenges faced by people with intersectional identities. According to some of them, organisations can play a positive role in creating a more inclusive environment by providing broader organisational training on issues related to intersectionality. By recognising individuals' unique challenges with intersectional identities and providing support, we can create a more equitable and empowering environment for all entrepreneurs.

One of the interviewees from the Netherlands also highlighted the significance of mentoring through a community-building approach. According to this interviewee, mentoring activities have a significant impact on empowering entrepreneurs with intersectional identities. Successful entrepreneurs from similar backgrounds can guide others to success during these activities. This is also where the role of positive representation is most prominent because marginalised people who made it can act as mentors and role models for the rest of their communities.

### 9.4.2 The Psychological Dimension: Perspectives on Failure and Success

On the psychological dimension of overcoming the challenges of intersectional discrimination, research participants also highlighted the importance of sharing experiences with others, both positive and negative. Most of the research participants agree on the positive role of professional psychological support in empowering entrepreneurs with intersectional identities. According to one of the psychologists, psychotherapy can help because it can develop one's self-awareness. It can also make people realise that each person has different definitions of success, and what matters is one's personal value system.

However, some psychologists expressed that individuals may be more willing to open up and seek support from others who share their intersectional identities in case of failure. This may be particularly true for individuals who are part of marginalised or disadvantaged groups. Regarding this, the research participants also highlighted the importance of normalisation. Hearing about other people with intersectional identities who have faced similar challenges and obstacles, individuals can begin to normalise their experiences and feel less alone in their struggles.

According to another of the psychologists interviewed, successfully navigating feelings of impostor syndrome and self-doubt has a lot to do with how people talk to themselves, irrespective of their identities. When one is convinced that they experience something because of their identities, then this may disempower them since identities are usually not changeable:

> *"Many times, you can't change your identity. So, if you believe you experience something because of your identity, it's difficult to say to yourself, 'This is how I will overcome it'. Because what am I going to do? Am I going to stop being a woman? Am I going to stop being a minority?"*

Therefore, she proposes that there should be a balance between recognising that some of your failures may be related to how society treats you based on your disadvantages. Another way to combat feelings of impostor syndrome, according to another of the psychologists interviewed, is to stop believing the disabling narratives and stories people tell themselves, which have long been rooted in people's consciousnesses. Instead, people can reach their network for empathy and support:

> *"We also have to consider that failure and shame are very related to these narratives and that the opposite of shame is empathy, so we should rely on people we know are empathetic."*

According to the research participants, sharing success stories can also motivate and inspire others to pursue their goals and aspirations. However, some research participants insisted on stressing the benefits of embracing failure. The same participant also suggested that it would be particularly beneficial not only to celebrate successes but also to shed light on failures along with constructive discussions about the reasons behind them. She stated the following:

> *"Because success also creates a distance, and we keep talking about highlighting good practices, in the end, this might end up being somewhat stereotypical. Bad practices could also be highlighted so we can study how to turn them from bad to good or to learn what we need to avoid."*

Similarly, one of the psychologists interviewed expressed the view that only discussing failures entails the risk of developing low self-esteem and signs of impostor syndrome. However, in general it is agreed that:

> *"Often, people do not discuss their failures and tend to discuss their successes. […] We should discuss failure more, as doing so has something therapeutic to it."*

The interviewee here emphasised the importance of embracing failure as a valuable guide in one's journey to success and highlighted its therapeutic and empowering potential.

## 9.5 Opportunities Arising from adopting an Intersectional Lens in Entrepreneurship

The concept of intersectionality provides a more nuanced and complex understanding of the opportunities and constraints faced by individuals with multiple social memberships or intersectional identities (Vorobeva, 2022). The application of intersectionality has arguably

improved the research on minority entrepreneurship since using this theoretical lens to approach the issue of inclusion in the field assisted in a better understanding of existing barriers to resources and networks (Vorobeva, 2022).

Dy and Agwunobi (2021) further highlight the productive potential of adopting an intersectional theoretical lens in examining context issues in entrepreneurship studies and advocate for the need to produce better intersectional research on entrepreneurship. This paper acknowledges the crucial role a person's social positionality (i.e., their concrete material circumstances, including education, previous experiences, resources etc.) plays in the prospects of becoming a successful entrepreneur. Based on this acknowledgement, Dy and Agwunobi (2019) challenge the assumptions of previous research, theorising that entrepreneurs operate in isolation from their context. Instead, they explain how intersectional approaches expose the effects of social positionality on the entrepreneurial experience (Dy & Aqwunobi, 2019).

The significance of adopting an intersectional lens in entrepreneurship has been highlighted by all the experts interviewed by the consortium. Most of them particularly emphasised the value of difference and diversity in the world of enterprise, which are elements that the concept of intersectionality embraces and promotes. One of the research participants explained how the opportunities from intersectionality are reciprocal. According to her, an intersectional approach benefits both marginalised people with intersectional identities and the rest of the community. She explained how an intersectional lens can offer an enlightening perspective on the issue to people who are in a more fortunate position socially.

### 9.5.1 Intersectionality and Resilience-Building

As explained earlier, intersectionality is very beneficial as it recognises that individuals have multiple intersecting identities, creating unique experiences and challenges. Intersectional enterprising identities, which include categories such as gender, race, class, physical ability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and migration background, lead to limited legitimacy of minorities in the market (Vorobeva, 2022). Because of this, the challenges are exponentially multiplied for minority entrepreneurs who find themselves at the intersection of two or more disadvantaged identities. Despite these challenges, provided that these individuals leverage their diverse identities, they can potentially build greater resilience (Vorobeva, 2022).

The research participants interviewed by the consortium also highlighted the intimate relationship between intersectionality as a theoretical framework and resilience-building. To build resilience, the experts on entrepreneurship interviewed overall suggested that individuals can leverage their diverse identities by seeking out communities and support networks that acknowledge and validate their intersecting identities. According to an interviewee from the Netherlands, resilience is not only an individual trait but also has a community dimension. In the following passage, this expert elaborates on the close connection between resilience-building and community-building among people with intersectional identities by using an elastic band metaphor:

> *"There is strength in numbers. Feeling supported, you can always do better. When there is one elastic band, it is easier to pull it apart - when there are many, it is harder to break, and they recover better."*

The same interviewee also suggested that a way to strengthen resilience is to focus on embracing acceptance on a social level. He also suggested that individualised needs should be paid more attention to and provided with more tailored support. The interviewee further stressed the importance of shifting existing paradigms, challenging inequalities, and building more open societies where difference is celebrated. This can be possible by adopting an intersectional lens towards people's intersecting identities and needs. He expressed the following:

> *"We tend to categorise people - intersectionality teaches us that we do not belong in only one box. A tolerant society would be the best approach, allowing people to express [themselves] and group with like-minded people. A strong sense of community and informal networks may also help."*

Therefore, it is in intersectionality that this interviewee locates the potential of social resilience and inclusion.

According to the research participants, it is also vital for individuals themselves to be inspired to celebrate their diverse identities and recognise the unique strengths and experiences that come with them. As suggested by the interviewees, this can help individuals recognise that their struggles are not unique and that they are sometimes expected to experience negative feelings. One of the interviewees from the context of Cyprus claimed that it is essential that disadvantaged people with intersectional identities know how to approach the right people to whom they can express their vulnerability safely. According to the interviewee, the very act of sharing their vulnerability empowers these people to continue to improve. It may also help them modify how they view a goal's achievement and realise that there is no such thing as perfect. An interviewee from Greece also stressed that it is crucial to dissociate identity from success or failure. This includes dismantling stereotypical assumptions that people from dominant groups are destined to succeed while minorities with intersectional identities are destined to fail.

### 9.5.2 Turning Disadvantages into Privileges

Minority entrepreneurs often experience intersectional discrimination, which hampers access to valuable resources (Vorobeva, 2022; Verduijn & Essers, 2013). Despite these challenges, some minority entrepreneurs turn their multiple social memberships into a competitive advantage by presenting them as a source of uniqueness and authenticity or by appealing to solidarity with other members of marginalised groups . Entrepreneurs with intersectional identities can make feasible contributions to economies and act as crucial agents of positive social change . Businesspersons who come from a minority background should therefore be encouraged to enter innovative and highly profitable industries that also have the potential for future growth, as this would help remove from them the stigma of small niche entrepreneurs (Vorobeva, 2022).

One of the entrepreneurship experts interviewed in Cyprus, a country that hosts many migrants, highlighted the benefits that an overarching niche marketing strategy could have in promoting entrepreneurs from marginalised communities. He stated the following:

> *"To get into the mainstream market, you can use the opportunities that will arise from niche marketing in combination with the different parts of your social identities."*

He also celebrated the potential and value of intersectionality, explaining how people with intersectional identities may have unique experiences and develop unique perspectives. Referring to migrant women entrepreneurs with intersectional identities, the interviewee suggested that they can thrive by using the power of their uniqueness. According to him, a way to leverage this uniqueness is to get into niche entrepreneurial ventures. An example he provided is that of African migrants in Cyprus who open African cuisine restaurants or other types of ethnic niche businesses to enter the mainstream market, offering the local community alternative options in both services and products.

Another of the research participants interviewed in the context of Cyprus also highlighted the benefits of embracing one's intersectional disadvantages. On the one hand, she acknowledged that being a woman in intersection with other disadvantaged identities in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, or functional diversity adds up to the challenges that this woman must face and overcome to 'prove her worth'. She believes this is a systemic issue deriving from social structures constructed in a way that society is not ready to accept and accommodate differences. Even though the challenges a female entrepreneur with intersectional identities faces are multiplied, the interviewee remained optimistic. She believes that success for people with intersectional identities is not impossible, stating the following:

> *"If I'm a woman with intersectional identities […] it means that the stakes to 'prove my worth' are ten times higher; this, however, does not subtract from my worth; it may as well add up to it!"*

In the above passage, the interviewee even emphasised how a woman's intersectional identity may be perceived favourably as a driving force for success, not exclusively as a disadvantage.

One of the research participants in Romania also expressed a very similar view:

> *"Firstly, to my mind, intersectionality could pose some obstacles, I think, which is unfair, of course. […] When you experience multiple intersecting inequalities, not just one, it's sometimes more difficult for people to continue and not give up, so it's apparently an obstacle. But if you want, you can turn it into leverage, perhaps. The fact that you have many different features can give you many different experiences or [more diverse] knowledge, right?"*

Some other essential elements that could help people with intersectional identities turn their disadvantage into a privilege identified by the research participants is the promotion of role models, empowerment meetings, discussion fora, and mentoring activities. One of the

interviewees from Greece focused on the benefits of organising empowerment meetings in which knowledge sharing, reflection, and recording of good practices would take place. As the interviewee elaborated, these meetings could consist of a mosaic of participants of different backgrounds discussing success stories from diverse fields and contexts.

## 9.6 Conclusion

⇒ Explored the theoretical framework of intersectionality and its relevance in entrepreneurship.

⇒ Defined intersectionality as the interaction of various identities (e.g., race, gender, sexuality) in shaping individuals' experiences and opportunities.

⇒ Discussed intersectional discrimination and disadvantage in minority entrepreneurship, with a focus on challenges faced by women entrepreneurs.

⇒ Provided insights into actions and initiatives to support entrepreneurs with intersectional identities, particularly women entrepreneurs.

⇒ Enriched the discussion with contributions from research participants in the project's national contexts.

⇒ Explored strategies for individuals with intersectional identities to overcome challenges, emphasizing networking, community support, solidarity, and the psychological dimension.

⇒ Noted potential opportunities arising from adopting an intersectional lens in entrepreneurship, including resilience-building.

⇒ Concluded by highlighting that with guidance and support, entrepreneurs with intersectional identities can transform disadvantages into advantages by leveraging their unique experiences and positioning for innovation and entrepreneurial success.

# 10. Turning failure into success

## 10.1 Overview of turning failure into success

Anyone who has tried anything in life or aimed for success has definitely checked in at failure's counter at some point. In our society, success is praised and sought after, and failure is rejected and even grieved. And if we stop to think about it, it is more than understandable that when it comes to the area of entrepreneurship, resources are invested, and certain outcomes are expected to be reached in order to harvest the "fruit of the effort". Literature suggests that failure combined with motivation and benevolent leadership is key to long-term and sustainable development (Zhou et al., 2020). Failure is also known to increase self-efficacy, which has a positive effect on venture (Yamakawa et al., 2015). Combined with the ability to engage in realistic thinking, proper planning and experience in the sector, the effect of self-efficacy is amplified and will have a further positive effect in growth. In addition, the narrative of a good and honest failure is one that may uplift and encourage entrepreneurs that will become successful (Olaison & Sørensen, 2014).

Therefore, the conclusion that success and failure go hand in hand and the awareness of one of them will help in the understanding of the other. Then if failure combined with the right ingredients, will point entrepreneurs on the right path to success, what about success itself? Are there certain traits that would "shield" entrepreneurs more from failure and guide us more towards success and how may entrepreneur women use these to their advantage?

The answers the previous questions provided by the research participants interviewed by the partner organizations were varied but were generally divided into two main dimensions: attitude-related and technical-related.

A great emphasis was placed by research participants on the practical technical abilities and knowledge such as creativity "*in the sense of connecting the dots between the talents of the entrepreneur and needs of the customer because it helps in adapting to change, becoming agile and resilien*t", brand management, social media visibility to reach customers, constant training and updating, having a good business plan and so on.

Among the attitude-related, skills mentioned were motivation, self-confidence, being able to enjoy what you are doing (passion), determination, candour, self-respect, vision, flexibility, long-term vision, perseverance, sense of purpose, self-knowledge and resilience. Interestingly, on this point, failure was often mentioned by the interviewees. According to several of them, success is determined by the attitude an entrepreneur has towards failure, by the ability not to be discouraged by it or to be defined by it but rather accept it as part of the journey to success. In the words of one of the entrepreneurship experts:

> "*You should not start with 'But how will I make it?' but with 'Why would I not make it? When I think positively, what I see is opportunities …, whereas when I think negatively, what I see is problems, which does not help in succeeding in the 'world' of entrepreneurship.*"

In addition, in the entrepreneurial environment where the clash between innovation, competitiveness and challenges at the order of the day, going through failure is a necessary step to progress and upgrading (Brown, n/a).

When it comes to women, though their start the in path of entrepreneurship is rougher compared to men, the interviewed entrepreneurs think that one of the things to be done is adopting the attitude-related traits (perseverance, patience, self-confidence etc). In addition, it was mentioned that they will have to cultivate self-love, as most of them are consumed with family and community caretaking. One of the interviewees insisted that:

> *"There are certain characteristics that come naturally to women, such as empathy, sociability and communication. They should take advantage of these qualities and apply them to their relationship with the customers and by doing so bring added value to the product or service being offered."*

According to some research participants, in many cases, because of how women and men are socialized differently to fit the roles society expects them to have, it may happen that women (more than men) tend to do things altruistically, and while there is nothing wrong with it, there has to be awareness of the efficient use of the resources (time, money efforts, knowledge, training, mentoring, information etc.) as these are the things that differentiate us in the market because if it only depended on the prize that would be mere survival.

Another suggestion given over and again in the interviews was the creation of a strong team and in the absence of the resources to do such thing, a network made of supporters, collaborators, and fellow entrepreneurs who can help and contribute to sustainability. In simpler words, "*a one-man band is humanly impossible. Think of it as a concert*".

However, acting on these convictions in real life and under market pressure is always easier said than done. This is especially true when the subjects of failure come from a more disadvantaged background and when taking a step to venture in entrepreneurship comes with less support and the consequences of failure have connotations in personal life as well.

## 10.2 General approach to dealing with failure and the repercussion of the efforts

Failure is usually dealt with in a rather negative way, with frustration and disappointment being some of the first reactions. In a way, these reactions are logical and legitimate due to results not reflecting our efforts and unmet expectations. However, the threshold is passed when these natural reactions are complemented by other debilitating ones such as demotivation, discouragement, inactivity, passiveness, lack of persistence, fear, paralysation and so on. According to the psychologists interviewed by the EH project consortium, this state is further exacerbated by the attributions individuals grant to failure. In the words of one of the interview participants:

> *"Attitude towards failure depends much on the culture. In our common words related to it are self-criticism, shame, isolation, reaching conclusions that lead to giving up."*

One of the interviewees from Spain explains failure through the Classic Attribution Theory. According to the Classic Attribution Theory, if failure is attributed to internal stable features (meaning "I failed because I lack certain qualities/talent /abilities"), it will directly "attack" self-esteem, self-confidence and efficacy and have a direct effect on the efforts by paralyzing, debilitating and in the worst-case scenario will take enter a deterministic mindset which will finally cease them.

According to some research participants, in the case of an entrepreneur, this behaviour is quite detrimental as it hinders progress, limits (personal) growth, deprives the individual of future opportunities (due to the wrong self-narratives or due to building fear cycles). In the same line, literature emphasises that positive psychology emphasizes the study of human strength and virtue to understand and facilitate positive developmental outcomes (Yates et al., 2015). Instead of nourishing a fatalistic attitude, the research emphasizes the need for resilience-guided practice that accommodates the dynamic nature of human development at multiple levels of analysis within and across individuals, families, institutions, communities, and nations (Yates et al., 2015).

The opposite attitude would be able to control the legitimate emotions of frustration and disappointment and would immerse the individual in self-reflection (asking questions, investigating what went wrong and scrutinizing through ingredients that need to be changed in order to achieve success (new knowledge or competences acquisition, resources).

This kind of mindset led the discussion with the research participants into the analysis of the Fixed versus Growth Mindset. According to the research participants, a Fixed Mindset will follow the same line of thought described so far. According to Carol Dweck's Theory of Motivation, a Fixed Mindset is dichotomous and will believe that certain qualities and abilities such as intelligence and talent are innate (meaning whether you are good/talented at something and you're not) and in their limits and restriction does create space for the curiosity and inquiry of exploring different approaches and innovation that will come as a result. In relation to failure, it would be attributed to these lacking and it means that it will always happen.

The Growth Mindset, on the other hand, will use the magic word "STILL", meaning there is a process going on and something is still happening. It is the belief that humans can evolve and develop their skills and competences. Quite opposite to the Fixed Mindset, not only will it open-mindedly consider failure as "part of the game", but it will also embrace it as an opportunity to learn, develop and refine the current goals and take a step closer to the achievement of the resilience and improvement and personal growth as a consequence. Indeed, research shows that the ability to learn from entrepreneurial failures of the past has served as a learning basis for a new venture (Amankwah-Amoah et al, 2018). Drawing from multiple case studies, more mistakes and learning outcomes from failure serve as a platform for capacity and resilience building in difficult times, or even to be applied when facing difficulties in other contexts (Amankwah-Amoah et al, 2018; Lattacher & Wdowiak, 2020).

However, common misconceptions about failure persist in our culture and navigating and knowing how to overcome them is crucial to achieving success.There are many
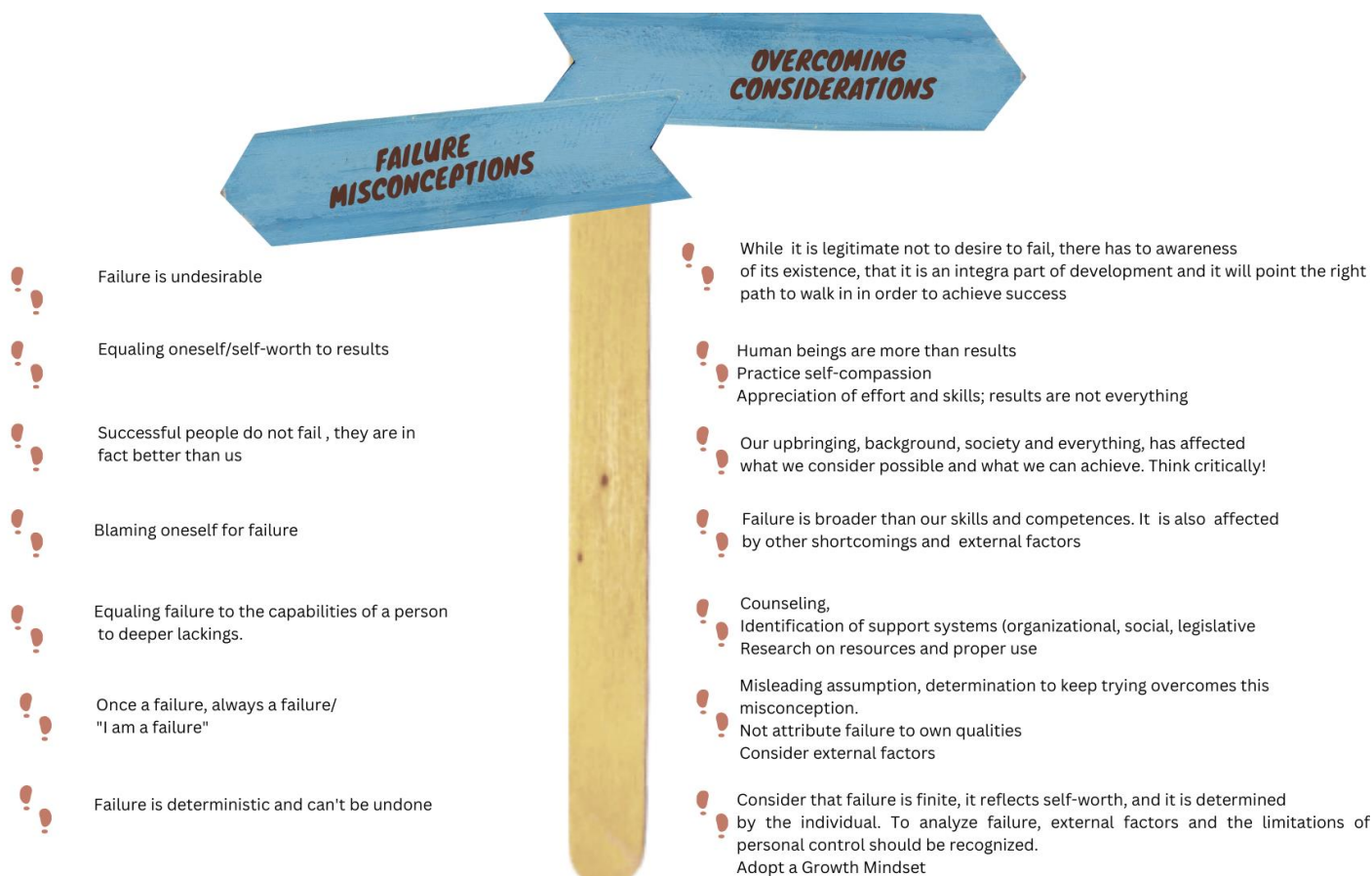
misconceptions related to failure that sometimes are fuelled by our own thoughts or internal narratives (shaped by our upbringing, experiences, society and many more factors), societal pressure and so on.

One of the interviewees brought her own example in how she had dealt with failure when she first moved to the country she resides now:

> "I first moved to do a voluntary project. Obviously, I could not speak the language, so I could not do my job. I entered in an identity crisis because my self-identity was strictly related to my profession. Equating oneself to results is wrong because people are much more than that."

In this point, research, in a complete agreement with the interviewees, points out that perceiving failure in the wrong way can deprive a person of the capacity to learn from it, being this true for organizations and individuals alike (Edmondson, 2021). In order to draw learning conclusions from failure, efforts should be made to establish a culture that counteracts blame, guilt and stigmatization, and one that fosters thorough in-depth analysis.  61his very point is delicate, because certain times going so deep into the roots of failure can have a countereffect on self-esteem (Edmondson, 2021).

The interviews that the EH project researchers have conducted with entrepreneurship experts, sociologists and psychologists in five European countries have identified useful some strategies to turning success into failure:



**FAILURE MISCONCEPTIONS**

- Failure is undesirable
- Equaling oneself/self-worth to results
- Successful people do not fail , they are in fact better than us
- Blaming oneself for failure
- Equaling failure to the capabilities of a person to deeper lackings.
- Once a failure, always a failure/ "I am a failure"
- Failure is deterministic and can't be undone

**OVERCOMING CONSIDERATIONS**

- While  it is legitimate not to desire to fail, there has to awareness of its existence, that it is an integra part of development and it will point the right path to walk in in order to achieve success
- Human beings are more than results
  Practice self-compassion
  Appreciation of effort and skills; results are not everything
- Our upbringing, background, society and everything, has affected what we consider possible and what we can achieve. Think critically!
- Failure is broader than our skills and competences. It  is also  affected by other shortcomings and  external factors
- Counseling,
  Identification of support systems (organizational, social, legislative
  Research on resources and proper use
- Misleading assumption, determination to keep trying overcomes this misconception.
  Not attribute failure to own qualities
  Consider external factors
- Consider that failure is finite, it reflects self-worth, and it is determined by the individual. To analyze failure, external factors and the limitations of personal control should be recognized.
  Adopt a Growth Mindset

*Source: EH Project created with Canva*

When addressing failure, it should be kept in mind that it is dealt with differently by different members or communities in society. The more disadvantaged the background, the more challenging it becomes.  For instance, in the entrepreneurial world, research participants stated that women face gender-specific challenges to success or deal with failure where internal and external forces play a role:

- Externally speaking, the sector and market are a male-dominated playground that confronts women entrepreneurs with stereotypes, disbelief and scepticism. It does not grant women initiatives trust, female representation or second change in the case of failure. I's worth mentioning that lack of representation is detrimental as it obscures the perspective of gender and has a high chance of reinforcing stereotypes by attributing failure (even from the women's point of view) to gender.
Let's keep in mind that this kind of belief is cultural and related to the fixed mindset. There is nothing in the research that shows significant differences between men and women and how they view and experience failure. It has more to do with the focus on control, meaning if people believe that control is external, they will trust more their abilities, face more pressure, get more anxious and probably fail anyway.

- From an internal point of view, when all the above is combined with failure, it often affects women's self-image, self-esteem, the goal setting approach and expectations (lowering them) and the vision they have on their capabilities. Since the business world is ruled, for its most part, by masculine-determined features (authority, know-how, etc.) women feel they are not masculine enough.
Women tend to be harder on themselves (being highly perfectionist and having a high sense of criticism) and it is not uncommon for them to be left with negative emotions and feelings of incompetency which are followed by inactivity. This will happen due to cognitive cultural and educational factors, as girls are generally taught from an early age to behave in certain ways that meet society's expectations. This kind of patriarchal and traditional education has made initiative-taking, adventure and entrepreneurship more desirable in men than women, and,at the same time, tends to easily blame failure on women.

Both internal and external forces as well as their combination will definitely hinder growth.

Then the question that arises naturally is the following: "*Is there a way for women to navigate in such industry, under this kind of pressure (be it internally or externally driven)*?"

According to the EH project interviewees (both psychologists or sociologists and entrepreneurship experts), while a controlled dose of pressure is oftentimes a good stimulus to keep us on our toes (and sometimes it adds to our concentration levels and even sparks our performance), too much of it and coming from inadequate sources and for the wrong factors (such as gender) can have quite the opposite effect, or even have the potential to take a toll on mental health.  One of the ways to keep it "under observation" is to be aware and acknowledge that the society that surrounds us is composed of inequalities, barriers and

stereotypes that have the power to hinder our self-image and performance. Instead, we can choose not to fully internalize the reason that led to failure (as it is not necessarily related to abilities and skills), but rather view it as part of the game and as an opportunity to learn. It is easy to fall "in these kinds of traps", therefore constant awareness and mindfulness are needed. A study done on university students who had participated in an 8-week mindfulness-based stress reduction program revealed that there are the following 5 repeated patterns (Hjeltnes et al., 2015):



*Source: Hjeltnes et al., 2015.*

The main takeout from this parallelism is that having awareness and being mindful of the environment where the entrepreneurship ventures are being developed, will provide tools like the above mentioned that will apply positive psychology, help aspiring entrepreneurs avoid fear of failure, increase their focus etc.

However, according to some research participants, the enhancement of abilities, skills and knowledge is not to be overlooked as they help individuals become better professionals in the desired industry. On the other hand, knowledge of self (self-awareness) assists in the identification of weaknesses, increasing self-confidence (becoming liberated from the pressure of proving oneself in a male-dominated industry) and eliminating competition with others. Education should be also undertaken at the societal level to construct awareness and empathy regarding the unique challenges that entrepreneur women face. Training companies and institutions to be more human-centred, diverse and inclusive is one approach. This will mean creating a welcoming environment for all underprivileged communities. What has been observed happening so far is that there are structural differences in gender-specific education given to women and men with the expectation to fulfil certain societal roles (men being entrepreneurs and leaders and women being emotional and caring). Of course, this will affect many life areas, including the way to respond to success and failure.

Another approach for women to navigate pressure-loaded industries is to seek to create a support network with fellow entrepreneur women and strive together to break down gender barriers and stereotypes.

Finally, the psychologists from Spain suggest that women should let go of guilty feelings of not taking enough care of families and communities. There seems to be a general consensus that women are more perfectionists, harder on themselves and under pressure to prove themselves, however, the interviews also revealed discrepancies in this specific point. Psychologists find that as men are educated to be initiative takers, society exerts push-pull forces that sometimes work to their advantage and sometimes they don't. On one hand, men are not allowed to fail and have difficulties accepting it when it happens viewing it at personal and societal level as public humiliation. This may undermine their desire to try again, as research too has concluded that fear of failure has cultural connotations and has the potential to hinder entrepreneurship (Tubadji, 2021).

On the other hand, once more one of the Spanish psychologists finds that men are more prone to be given second chances. Oppositely, women tend to have less of an egocentric perspective and don't view success as a public exhibition and personal acknowledgement, but more as a way to achieve objectives, to grow personally and oftentimes their entrepreneurial ventures are driven by the desire to provide better for their families and communities. And while as previously mentioned it is a great quality to detach success from the perception of self, women are generally treated more harshly when they experience failure and do not find the needed support to recover and try again.

And of course, both scenarios are true. Then what can be done practically and intentionally (through real tools) to shift the failure mindset when caught in an unfavourable situation that could sabotage efforts, objectives and any reached results?

The psychologists interviewed seem to agree that the first step for women to take would be to stop being so hard, critical and self-demanding on themselves, and above all to pay careful attention to their inner dialogue.

> *"Let's stop for a moment and think of a friend who took a series of wrong decisions that caused them to fail. We would be the first to be compassionate, encouraging and urging them not to give up. But what if we talked to them with the same harshness that we talk to ourselves. If would be considered mistreatment. "*

Another tool mentioned by the research participants would be to change the vision we have of failure and try to view it as part of the path, an opportunity to learn and analyse internal and external factors and cultivate resilience and perseverance. In other words, the interviewees called for developing a growth mindset. This requires much personal work of self-awareness and self-reflection to understand personal strengths, weaknesses and beliefs, and observe how the reaction to failure affects decision-making and future performance.

Creating a support/mentorship network or community, ideally with women entrepreneurs in it, is also a great asset to exchange information, knowledge, experience,support and analyse the specific and common reasons for failure. These kinds of alliances also contribute to the improvement of representation and visibility of female entrepreneurship.

Finally, mental health professionals and therapists can provide women with tools in a personalized manner, depending on the precise needs at that precise moment.

As seen up until this point, women tend to be disadvantaged in the field of entrepreneurship which is more male-dominated and harder on women initiatives. But what happens when we slightly shift the focus to women communities with who come from disadvantaged backgrounds (e.g., immigrants, , individuals who belong to the LGBTQI+ community and other marginalized social groups)? Do the challenges persist? Are they exacerbated?

In these communities, women who want to venture into entrepreneurship face unique challenges in addition to gender stereotypes which intersect with fewer opportunities and social capital, fewer resources and discrimination. When these women encounter failure, it becomes very difficult to secure funds and resources. On top of all these challenges, intersectionality sums making it difficult to explore due to the many identities that intersect that also have specific particularities depending on the ethnicity, each country, specific context etc., therefore making it almost impossible to make generalisations.

Another opinion mentioned among the research participants is that, although it is more difficult for these communities to reach success, it does not mean that they necessarily have to have a worse relationship with failure, as they have grown accustomed to facing extra difficulties, not having the support of their nuclear family and the community.

## 10.3 Conclusion

⇒ The exploration of turning failure into success highlights the complexity of entrepreneurial endeavors and societal views on success and failure.
⇒ Success and failure are intertwined in entrepreneurship and are essential aspects of the entrepreneurial journey.
⇒ Changing the perception of failure requires efforts at individual, societal, and educational levels.
⇒ Women entrepreneurs, particularly from marginalized backgrounds, face compounded challenges including intersectionality, external skepticism, and self-doubt.
⇒ Creating a culture of inclusivity, resilience, growth, and providing tailored support and mentorship can help women entrepreneurs overcome these challenges.
⇒ Success and failure are intertwined in entrepreneurship, emphasizing the importance of perseverance, adaptability, and a growth-oriented mindset in driving innovation and societal progress.

## Conclusion

The Pedagogical Guidebook on "Entrepreneurship through the lens of intersectionality: Impact, challenges, and opportunities" has provided a comprehensive examination of the intricate relationship between entrepreneurship and intersectionality. Through the exploration of the impact, challenges, and opportunities faced by marginalized groups in entrepreneurial endeavors, this guidebook has contributed valuable insights to inform research, policy and pedagogical practices.

Entrepreneurship is not a level playing field. Individuals at the intersections of various social identities face unique barriers and systemic disadvantages that hinder their entrepreneurial pursuits. Throughout this guidebook it was described how intersecting identities shape experiences, discrimination and disadvantage in the entrepreneurial landscape.

The guidebook has highlighted the importance of positive representation for marginalized groups in entrepreneurship by promoting positive role models and displaying examples of initiatives that empower and uplift disadvantaged entrepreneurs. We can challenge stereotypes, inspire future generations and create a more inclusive ecosystem that values diverse perspectives and experiences by adopting the strategies and lens presented.

Moreover, the guidebook has shed light on the specific challenges faced by underrepresented/ women entrepreneurs and those belonging to underrepresented communities by analyzing their experiences. We have identified intersectional barriers and the need for targeted support mechanisms to address the unique needs of these individuals. Through actions, initiatives and support systems, we can break down these barriers and create equitable opportunities for entrepreneurial success.

Turning failure into success has also been a key theme explored in this guidebook. Understanding failure as a valuable learning experience and a catalyst for growth, is key for entrepreneurs to embrace resilience, adaptability, and perseverance in their entrepreneurial journeys. Individuals can transform setbacks into steppingstones toward future success by reframing failure and capitalizing on the lessons learned.

In conclusion, this guidebook emphasizes the importance of examining entrepreneurship through an intersectional lens. The acknowledgment and addressing of the challenges faced by marginalized groups can support a more inclusive and equitable entrepreneurial ecosystem that harnesses the talents, creativity, and potential of all individuals, regardless of their social identities. Through continued research, policy reforms and pedagogical interventions, we can foster a transformative environment where entrepreneurship becomes a vehicle for social change, empowerment, and economic growth.

As we conclude this guidebook, we hope it serves as a catalyst for further exploration, dialogue, and action in the realm of entrepreneurship and intersectionality. We can build a future where entrepreneurship becomes a truly accessible and empowering endeavor for all by continuing to challenge the status quo and striving for inclusivity.

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Other resources:

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