



# Policy Pointers from the Youth Entrepreneurship Policy Academy



## The importance of youth entrepreneurship

**Young entrepreneurs drive innovation, create jobs and find solutions to social challenges.** They can strengthen competitiveness and economic resilience in the European Union (EU) by bringing new ideas to the market and revitalising local economies. Being quick technology adopters, young entrepreneurs also have a crucial role in driving the digital transformation and green transition.

**Young people in the EU show great interest in entrepreneurship.** About four-in-ten young people report a preference for being an entrepreneur over an employee. However, only one-in-twenty are working on a start-up, and barely half of these succeed at launching a new business. This gap between intentions and action is due to several factors including a lack of knowledge about how to take the first steps towards launching a business, barriers accessing resources (e.g. funding) and difficulties navigating administrative processes (e.g. registering their business).

**There is a clear rationale for governments to support young entrepreneurs:**

1. Young people face greater barriers to business creation than older generations, stemming from market and institutional failures (e.g. access to finance, few opportunities to be exposed to entrepreneurship in education).
2. Innovation and job creation can be realised by supporting talented youth with high potential business ideas.
3. In some regions, youth unemployment remains high and young people may face difficulties entering the labour market. Entrepreneurship can provide an alternative route into work.
4. Young people can develop transversal skills in entrepreneurship programmes that will help them in their career, regardless of whether they go on to start a business.

## Our journey through Youth Entrepreneurship Policy Academy

**The Youth Entrepreneurship Policy Academy (YEPA) was officially launched in Brussels on the 9th of March 2023 by the European Commission and the OECD.** The ambition was to create a multi-stakeholder learning network that brought together more than 150 policy officers, programme managers, young entrepreneurs, networks (including social entrepreneurship networks) and researchers to:

- Hear directly from young entrepreneurs about their motivations and ambitions, successes and challenges, and unmet support needs.
- Exchange on “what works” and innovative approaches to supporting young entrepreneurs.

**The YEPA included more than 20 events between the launch in 2023 and the second in-person meeting in Brussels on 6-7 October 2025.** These events examined issues such as improving access to finance (e.g. microfinance, crowdfunding), building entrepreneurship skills (e.g. peer learning, online learning), expanding networks, leveraging role models, overcoming the unique challenges faced by green, digital and social entrepreneurs, strengthening policy design and delivery, and much more. Each event featured expert speakers, group work and case studies that showcased young entrepreneurs and impactful initiatives.

**Across these events, YEPA participants identified five overarching lessons. Building on these insights, a series of five action-oriented policy pointers were also developed.** These lessons and policy pointers are developed in the present document. They provide high-level guidance on actionable steps that can increase the relevance and effectiveness of policy interventions. Stakeholders can make use of the present document to engage in policy dialogues with their local, regional and/or national governments and implement the lessons in their own work and projects.

# Lessons learned: key takeaways from the YEPA

The five YEPA key takeaways capture participants' most valued insights. They highlight the core messages and practical lessons that emerged from case studies, policy dialogues and shared reflections.



## 1. Design together, succeed together

*"There needs to be a platform where policy makers, entrepreneurs of all ages, and business professionals can exchange ideas because every part of this ecosystem has very unique views that should be shared."*

Adrian Davies: CEO & Founder, Meshara

**Collaboration in the design and delivery of youth entrepreneurship support can make it more relevant and increase take-up.** To get this right, those

designing support would benefit from engaging with young entrepreneurs and youth entrepreneurship networks to learn about their support needs and how they would prefer to receive support (e.g. short formats vs. long formats, online vs. in-person). Many successful public programmes are delivered in partnership with specialised youth entrepreneurship organisations given their experience with effectively communicating and working with young people, which typically increases outreach and take-up. Moreover, organisations that have experience working with young people have an established trust. This can help overcome the scepticism that young people may have about the relevance of public support programmes. It is also important to learn from the successes and mistakes of others. Seeking advice from other initiatives (including those that have closed and those in other regions or countries) can fast-track to success.



## 2. Invest in young entrepreneurs, invest in the future

**Young people most frequently identify a lack of finance and financial risks as the greatest barriers to starting a business.** This is not surprising since most have little, if any, work experience and therefore do not have a lot of savings that can be used to build a business. Similarly, young people typically lack collateral for a loan. This makes many traditional financial instruments difficult to obtain for budding young entrepreneurs and expensive when they do succeed. These challenges are compounded by a lack of experience that can hurt their pitches to lenders and investors and less developed networks that are not effective at uncovering potential funding sources. This can drive many young entrepreneurs into activities with low barriers to entry and high failure rates. However, there are a growing number of financial options for young entrepreneurs. Microfinance continues to grow in the EU and newer possibilities such as crowdfunding (debt and equity) and matching platforms are creating new opportunities for young entrepreneurs to secure the funding needed to get their business off the ground.

*"Being young sometimes you don't have all the doors open and usually you have to knock those doors down, and that is what entrepreneurship is about."*

Joni Rakipi: ETH Zürich



### 3. Prepare young entrepreneurs for an AI-driven world

*"[A] lot of young people that are not from an engineering school would say, oh, then I cannot become an entrepreneur in tech. And that's absolutely wrong. In tech, we need a lot of different competencies, a lot of different careers."*

Elina Cohen-Peirano: CEO and Founder, Urone

**Artificial intelligence (AI) is already shaping businesses and creating new opportunities.** Generative AI can support entrepreneurs in generating new business ideas, building strategies, developing and testing product ideas, and performing some tasks more efficiently and cost-effectively. Agentic AI holds even greater potential for these tasks. While young people are often at the forefront of AI use, not all are comfortable working with digital tools nor have access to them. This means that in addition to investing in incubation and specialised training programmes to help young entrepreneurs develop and deploy AI tools, there is also a need for more basic AI training and measures to improve access to these tools. This will lead to a greater diversity of ideas which strengthens innovation. Tailored and targeted initiatives are popping up around the EU but much more is needed, including broader policy actions to ensure that AI is developed with appropriate guardrails. Governments also have an opportunity to leverage AI in the design, delivery and assessment of policies and measures.



### 4. Diverse role models spark diverse ideas

**More than half of entrepreneurs report that role models had an important role in their decision to start a business.** They plant the seed of entrepreneurial motivation and inspire potential young entrepreneurs to follow their dreams. While many young people look to highly visible celebrity entrepreneurs, there is also a need to showcase "normal" entrepreneurs to demonstrate the many faces of entrepreneurship. This will also demonstrate that there is no single notion of success. Role models can be promoted in campaigns and engaged to speak at events and schools, being careful to represent the reality of entrepreneurship. That is, the long hours, risks and setbacks rather than only focusing on huge successes.

*"It is very important that more people recognise themselves in the narrative and the image of an entrepreneur."*

Ruben Brave: CEO, Entelligence



### 5. Evaluate to elevate

*"Learn what works from evaluations."*

Dr. Jonathan Potter: Head of Entrepreneurship Policy and Analysis Unit, OECD

**Evaluation shows what works, why it works and how to do it better.** This is critically important for youth entrepreneurship policies and programmes, where the success can be measured in different ways (e.g. young person created a business, found a job). A helpful first step in policy design is an ex ante evaluation, which assesses whether proposed actions are relevant, coherent with existing supports and whether expected impacts are realistic. Once measures and initiatives are launched, governments need to understand whether the investments are justified by the outcomes and impacts, and if anything can be done to achieve more. Impact evaluations identify the difference made by the measure or initiative relative to what would have occurred otherwise. Successful evaluations are anticipated when interventions are designed so that the data needed to measure outcomes and impacts is collected, and that there are mechanisms to feed the results back into how the measures and initiatives are delivered.

# Policy pointers for future youth entrepreneurship policy

YEPA's policy pointers distil key lessons into forward-looking guidance, offering context, clear actions and case studies to drive more relevant and effective youth entrepreneurship policies.



## 1. Open doors for everyone and design practical steps for promising talent to succeed

*"Start earlier, go deeper, include everyone"*

Professor Thomas Cooney, Technical University Dublin

**Each young entrepreneur is unique, with different motivations, ambitions and goals.** One of the challenges that policy officers and programme managers face is to meet these needs by offering the right support to the right entrepreneur at the right time. To succeed, governments need three ingredients. First, outreach activities are needed to inform young people about available support and attract them into the support system. Second, a range of programmes and measures are needed to address the multiple barriers faced by young entrepreneurs (e.g. general and specialised training, coaching and mentoring, financial measures), considering the characteristics of the local economy (e.g. sectors, types of schools, profiles of graduates) and budget realities. Third, mechanisms are needed to direct young entrepreneurs to the support that they need.

**There are pros and cons to offering tailored support to address individual challenges and the secret is to find the right balance.** In general, tailored support is better adapted to the specific needs of young entrepreneurs because programme administration and front-line support workers are more aware of these needs and better equipped to address them. This usually leads to better outcomes. In addition, tailored support typically has higher participation rates because it is more attractive since it is offered by trusted organisations. This can draw people into the business support system such as NEETs who would otherwise remain outside of it. Finally, tailored support can encourage policy innovation through local experiments that could then be mainstreamed when they are impactful and scalable. These benefits need weighed against higher development and delivery costs and potentially weaker linkages with the mainstream support infrastructure.

## Action steps

- Use ex ante evaluations to identify support needs by mapping existing supports and consulting young entrepreneurs on gaps and unmet needs.
- Consult and collaborate with youth entrepreneurship networks and organisations when interventions are being developed to help ensure content is relevant and attractive. This will also help identify effective delivery options, e.g. online vs. in-person.
- Use promotional campaigns and entrepreneurship education to raise awareness support offers among young people and inform them of the potential benefits of participating. Websites, one-stop-shops and business advisers also play an important role in helping young entrepreneurs identify relevant support offers. Some countries are starting to use AI-driven personalities and tools to help make these connections.
- Offer “light” support to young people who indicate an interest in trying entrepreneurship (e.g. workshops, entrepreneurship education) and more intensive support to those who demonstrate that they have a viable business idea. This could be assessed by expert judges or by providing support based on the achievement of milestones (e.g. prototype development, pre-sales).
- Design interventions as part of packages that offer a sequential mix of general and specialised supports, encouraging young entrepreneurs to use one or more types of complementary and reinforcing interventions depending on their needs.
- Offer individualised supports such as coaching for fixed periods of time. Volunteer coaches could be used when the business community is sufficiently large. Creating incentives for volunteers such as building a network of established, successful entrepreneurs and offering training will likely increase the pool of potential coaches.
- Provide training and tools for trainers, coaches and teachers working with young entrepreneurs to ensure that they are equipped to succeed. The quality of interventions can be improved if the front-line support providers have opportunities to exchange on their experiences and provide feedback to programme managers.
- Invest in specialised supports (e.g. IP management) and infrastructure (e.g. incubators) when there is sufficient demand and political support. Bridging experienced young entrepreneurs into mainstream programmes can help address this need and help keep costs manageable.
- Build online portals where young entrepreneurs can access administrative information and short training materials (e.g. short videos, games) on specific issues (e.g. filing taxes) when they need it.

## YEPA case studies

The [Entrepreneurship Competence Framework \(EntreComp\)](#) was developed by the European Commission to identify and provide a framework for entrepreneurship skills. The EntreComp framework recognises the need to foster entrepreneurial mindsets and competencies in a variety of contexts and settings. It proposes transversal skills that can be applied in formal and informal learning contexts as well as structured and non-structured learning systems, applying equally to education and training systems.

[Entrepreneurship Week](#) (Austria) is a youth-dedicated entrepreneurship programme that seeks to empower young people in developing entrepreneurial thinking and mindsets as part of the Austrian National Plan for Entrepreneurship Education. It is a co-operation between the Federal Ministry of Labour and Economy, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, the Austrian Federal Chamber of Commerce, Austrian Start-ups and IFTE.

[Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs](#) is an EU programme that helps people who are starting a business learn from experienced entrepreneurs in another country. Since 2009, it gives new business owners a chance to spend time abroad, see how another company works and get advice on how to grow their own ideas. By joining the programme, new entrepreneurs can build useful skills, make international contacts and understand different markets. At the same time, the host entrepreneur also benefits by getting fresh ideas and possible future partners. The programme is not specifically for young people, but youth is one of the largest group of participants. To date, the programme has created over 12 800 business exchanges.

[Junior Achievement Europe](#) is the largest provider of entrepreneurship education in Europe, working in 41 countries to build bridges between education, business and policy. Over 424 000 high school and university students each year embark on the entrepreneurship journey, transforming their ideas into real businesses through JA entrepreneurship programmes. Participants progress from ideation to product development and market launch, developing entrepreneurial mindsets, teamwork and leadership skills through experiential learning. JA Europe also offers over 151 000 innovation challenges and competitions take place annually across Europe, where students co-create market-ready solutions with mentors and companies. These events foster creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving, while connecting students with business role models.



[OECD Youth Policy Toolkit](#) aims to support governments in implementing the OECD Recommendation on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People. It provides policy advice and case study models to promote government-wide strategies and schemes to improve outcomes for young people in many policy areas, including employment, entrepreneurship, education and social policies, as well a civic engagement and public governance.

[OECD-EU Better Entrepreneurship Policy Tool](#) is an online tool designed for policy makers and other interested parties at national, regional and local levels who wish to explore how public policy can support women, youth, seniors, the unemployed and migrants in business creation and self-employment as well as support the development of social enterprises. The Tool includes a self-assessment tool, policy guidance notes and case studies.

[351 Portuguese Start-up Association](#) (Portugal) is an inclusive entrepreneurship community in Portugal, comprised of entrepreneurs, start-ups, enterprises, investors and other entrepreneurial ecosystem actors that engages directly with public institutions to drive grassroot innovations and push for policy action. It highlights how policy makers can build linkages with existing support actors and leverage their connections within the greater entrepreneurial ecosystem when designing and delivering policy.







## 2. Connect young entrepreneurs to the finance they need to start and grow

*“There are two things that really hold young entrepreneurs back. One is that they absolutely must have an entrepreneurial mindset. . . [And the second is] access to capital.*

Anita Tiessen: CEO, Youth Business International

### **Different business ideas need different amounts and types of finance to fuel their launch and growth.**

The range of tools at the disposal of governments is increasing and now goes well beyond traditional loans and loan guarantees. Public authorities are now also involved in offering and facilitating micro-grants, microfinance, zero interest loans, crowdfunding, innovation grants, matching (investors and entrepreneurs), risk capital and more. There are three keys to successfully developing impactful financial measures to support young entrepreneurs:

1. Manage risk by partnering with the private sector to co-finance measures and leverage their expertise in assessing projects. Risks can further be mitigated with close monitoring of funded projects and timely interventions if challenges are encountered.
2. Offer more financial literacy in entrepreneurship education and training programmes so that young entrepreneurs better understand their business' funding needs, their options and how to pitch their project to lenders and investors.
3. Link financial measures with non-financial supports such as coaching when appropriate to increase the young entrepreneurs' chances of success.

## Action steps

- Measure/estimate the extent to which young entrepreneurs are (i) excluded from mainstream financial markets (e.g. bank loans) and (ii) making use of existing start-up finance measures (e.g. loan guarantees).
- Consider creating youth-branded versions of existing instruments if take-up rates are low by young entrepreneurs. Youth-friendly marketing could be used to attract young entrepreneurs to apply for existing (general) measures.
- Use entrepreneurship websites and social media campaigns to promote public funding measures for young entrepreneurs and inform them about the different opportunities.
- Expand the supply of microfinance when there is unmet demand by directly investing to increase the supply or offering incentives for private actors to enter the market (e.g. offer guarantees, interest rate subsidies). EU Programmes such as the Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) can offer financial and technical support to national and regional authorities.
- Use matching funding (i.e. public funds that are made available in a certain proportion to private funds raised, according to certain conditions) as an incentive to increase private funds available to young entrepreneurs, including on democratised platforms such as crowdfunding.
- Explore the potential of crowdfunding to increase access to debt and equity finance for young entrepreneurs. This includes ensuring suitable regulations to protect investors and foster transparency (e.g. disclosure of information on crowdfunding status and selection criteria for projects). Dedicated crowdfunding campaigns could be launched for young entrepreneurs that leverage matching public funding.
- Use innovation funding measures to support cutting-edge and university-based projects that allow students and graduates to get involved in research-based start-ups. In addition, establishing university entrepreneurship centres and incubators can help facilitate funding opportunities for start-ups by students and researchers, including linking with investors.
- Consider using business competitions to identify and fund high-potential start-up ideas. Additional activities such as workshops and professional coaching could be used to aid young entrepreneurs during the competitions. While there are benefits of using business competitions to provide support, there are also risks such as damaged self-confidence for those who did receive funding or recognition.
- Partner with private sector financial actors to assess projects seeking funding from public instruments.
- Use campaigns to disseminate information on the potential of young social entrepreneurs to increase awareness among financiers and other market actors about non-traditional entrepreneurship profiles. One effective approach is to establish a shared context-specific understanding of social enterprises across social economy actors. Clear definitions and/or legal framework will help improve recognition.

- Explore the use of alternative credit assessment tools to facilitate access to finance for young entrepreneurs in private markets. These could include mentoring to observe the entrepreneur, personal references, solidarity guarantees (i.e. loans with security based on group guarantees that combine people/organisations supporting entrepreneurs with limited access to conventional finance) and borrowing against future savings.
- Boost the investor readiness of young entrepreneurs by embedding financial literacy (for business) modules in entrepreneurship training
- and education for young people. Dedicated training programmes could be used when demand is sufficiently high.
- Integrate “soft” support such as training, advice from professional business advisors and experts, and mentorship with financial support measures to help young entrepreneurs make informed and strategic decisions on using funding appropriately.

## YEPA case studies

The [EU Code of Good Conduct for Microfinance Provision](#) aims to set high ethical standards through a unified set of best practice guidelines for the microfinance sector in Europe and serves as a self-regulation tool and quality label for microfinance institutions. It also provides assurance to fund recipients as well as investors and funders that microfinance institutions conduct their business in a fair and ethical manner.

[European Crowdfunding Network](#) is an independent, professional business network that aims to promote transparency, regulation and good governance in the digital finance sector. The network engages in policy dialogue with EU institutions, participates in market studies and research projects, provides consulting services as well as coaching and mentoring to start-ups and SMEs, and hosts events and helps to promote the EURO CROWD Code of Conduct.

[Funds for Good](#) (Belgium) aims to make the European financial ecosystem more inclusive through directing funding to the development of microfinance and social entrepreneurship actors by offering long-term financing through various debt instruments with flexible repayment periods.

[MicroStart](#) (Belgium) is a microfinance institution, which offers microloans, grants, entrepreneurship training and support services to entrepreneurs who face challenges in accessing finance from traditional providers.

The Social Investment and Skills Window of the [InvestEU Programme](#), backed by an EU guarantee, enables finance providers to provide loans to microenterprises and social enterprises that would otherwise not be available to them. Young entrepreneurs may also be supported by these schemes if they meet the respective conditions.



### 3. Nurture young entrepreneurs driving the green and digital economies

*“My generation, including myself, talks a big talk about wanting to change the world. To make this energy and frustration useful, we need to leverage science-based entrepreneurship, not just to highlight problems, but to build scalable, creative solutions.”*

Ahmed Hadi: CEO and Founder, MIMIR

**Young entrepreneurs can be highly innovative, applying fresh ideas, mindsets, energies and newly acquired knowledge to create new products, services and business models.** They often express strong motivation for supporting the green transition and are more frequent users of new digital technologies such as AI than adults. Releasing the potential of innovative young green and digital green entrepreneurs will hinge on stimulating their

technical and entrepreneurial skills as well as enabling access to tools for innovative start-up development, including business incubation and public procurement for innovation. It is not just young entrepreneurs with green and digital products who are concerned with the green and digital transitions. All young entrepreneurs should be encouraged to go greener in their businesses and to adopt the relevant digital technologies, whatever their product area.

## Action steps

- Embed green entrepreneurship and digital entrepreneurship modules in entrepreneurship education to help young people understand the specific challenges of launching businesses in these areas (e.g. need for patient capital, international IP protection).
- Develop dedicated training programmes on sustainability and digital issues and challenges when demand is sufficiently high, especially at the university level.
- Use business competitions and challenges to encourage young people to find solutions to social challenges such as climate change, including through social entrepreneurship. These could be used to award funding to promising ideas and offer valuable learning opportunities for potential young entrepreneurs.
- Incentivise business incubators and accelerators to develop specialised programmes for green and digital start-ups in collaboration with the private sector. Incentives could include subsidising development costs for new programmes and training staff, and co-financing equipment purchases and testing facilities.
- Create specialised financing instruments for green and digital entrepreneurs, particularly those with strong patient capital needs.
- Leverage public procurement markets to create opportunities for young green and digital entrepreneurs. A first step would be to offer modules on public procurement in entrepreneurship training programmes for young people. Other possible steps include setting aside a percentage of public contracts for green entrepreneurs and developing guidance and tools for entrepreneurs to support the preparation of tenders.
- Develop strategies that align public and private actors in the entrepreneurial ecosystem to support green and digital entrepreneurship, particularly among young people.

## YEPA case studies

[AIENTRE4Youth](#) is a pioneering programme co-funded by the European Union and Intel, integrates artificial intelligence into JA Europe's entrepreneurship learning programmes across 10 countries, focusing on AI literacy and innovation in sectors like agri-food. It equips teachers and students with digital and entrepreneurial skills, enabling youth to apply AI tools to solve real business and social challenges. The programme has so far delivered nearly 12 000 learning experiences, trained 558 teachers and 40 master trainers, and generated 746 AI-based student solutions, empowering young Europeans to lead in ethical, inclusive and technology-driven entrepreneurship.

[Build Up Labs](#) (Portugal) is a start-up studio and incubator, specialising in developing digital products and bringing these innovations to market. The Venture Builder (start-up studio) engages the in-house team to ideate, build and grow start-ups in parallel to other activities, while the Start-up Incubator provides technical support, mentorship, networking and partnering opportunities to help founders start and scale.

[Business Finland](#) (Finland) is a public organisation under the Ministry of Employment and the Economy that provides funds for innovation, including green innovations. Finland has introduced measures to encourage more innovative and greener entrepreneurship, notably a Start-up Permit (which aims to attract non-Finnish talent and innovative entrepreneurs to start their businesses in Finland), and the Sustainable Growth Programme (which supports ecological, social and sustainable growth).

[Denmark Technical University](#) (Denmark) aims to create a dynamic and supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem where education, research and start-ups can work together to create innovative solutions. The university promotes and fosters innovation among young people, including through the initiatives of [Green Challenge](#), [DTU Science Park](#) (focused on deep tech), PreSeed Ventures (early-stage venture capital), [Earthbound](#), [AFRI](#) (IPR, licensing and partnerships) as well as [DTU Skylab](#). The ecosystem offers a range of resources for start-ups, including funding opportunities (DTU Discovery grants, Proof of Concept Grants, SkyLab Funding, InnoExplorer Grants), incubation, mentoring, networking opportunities with industry leaders and investors, and programmes to scale businesses. DTU Science Park also is home to the GreenUp Accelerator, which supports climate tech start-ups working to reduce CO2 emissions.



## 4. Plan robust monitoring and evaluation from the start, backed by appropriate resources

*“Learning how to learn from our mistakes and not be afraid - this is the biggest challenge for entrepreneurs in Europe.”*

Irina Illieva: Head of Marketing, Communications and Policy, JA Europe

**Monitoring and evaluation are critical for identifying which youth entrepreneurship programmes work in which contexts and how they can be improved.** It should not be a one-off activity; rather it should be continuous and integrated into various policy stages, including design, implementation and post-delivery. Clear and measurable objectives should be defined prior to the policy being announced. Progress should be tracked over time and adjustments made when circumstances

change, or results are not as expected. Reliable methods with control groups should be used to evaluate impacts and relevant and comparable metrics use, including numbers of start-ups generated, their survival and growth. Mechanisms to incorporate evaluation results into programme revision and future policy developments should be also included. It is important to remember that many impacts of entrepreneurship policies tend to occur over long timelines.



## Action steps

- Define relevant and measurable objectives and targets for each youth entrepreneurship policy intervention during the policy design phase. They should be clear and defined prior to the policy being announced as the basis for evaluation to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the policy after its implementation.
- Provide a budget for programme evaluation, use reliable evaluation methods and integrate the evaluation results into future policy development. Use a minimum of common metrics in all youth entrepreneurship evaluations to facilitate comparison of outcomes across programmes, namely impact on business start-up, survival, and employment and sales growth.
- Share lessons from reliable youth entrepreneurship policy evaluations between countries, including exchanging with policy makers such as the OECD International SME and Entrepreneurship Policy Evaluation Discussion Network (INSPEN) or national evaluation networks.
- Improve the evidence-based on youth-led enterprises through administrative data and dedicated surveys. This should include data collection on social enterprises, notably the age of entrepreneurs in business registers and national and international surveys. It is also important that data is gender-disaggregated and age-disaggregated.

## YEPA case studies

The CréaJeunes programme (France) was designed to help unemployed youth in disadvantaged neighbourhoods overcome obstacles to starting a business through entrepreneurship training, coaching, and financial support. The [evaluation](#) found that the skills and competences learned through the programme had positive impacts on reducing youth unemployment although it did not increase youth entrepreneurship.

The [OECD SME and Entrepreneurship Evaluation Framework](#) sets out good practice principles for policy evaluation in SME and entrepreneurship policy, including youth entrepreneurship policy. It provides information on how to judge the quality of an evaluation using the Six Steps to Heaven and Evaluation Quality Score approaches, how to set objectives and targets, how to develop appropriate evaluation methods and use evaluation evidence and offers examples of reliable evaluations internationally that can be used as inspiration by evaluators and policy makers.

[Yes I Start Up](#) (Italy) is an entrepreneurship training programme offered by the National Agency for Active Labour Market Policies and developed by Invitalia and the Italian Agency for Microfinance. It promotes self-employment and entrepreneurship among NEET youth (18-29 years old) by providing free entrepreneurship training, mentoring, support services and financial support. An [evaluation](#) looked at the impact of providing training to start and manage a business to youth who are not in employment, education or training (the YISU programme) and subsequent access to zero-interest microloans (SELFIEmployment programme). The training alone did not increase start-up rates, but the companies that went on to be financed had a higher survival rate (97% vs. 83% as of August 2020).

An [evaluation](#) of the Young Rural Entrepreneurs Programme (Colombia) examined a business training programme offered by the National Training Service (Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje, SENA) to address unemployment and under-employment among low-income youth (16-25 years old), notably by strengthening their entrepreneurship capacity. Participants had a greater probability of being employed (participants were 13-14% more likely to have a job); had higher hourly labour income (participants earned 5 000 pesos more); took more steps towards starting a business (the probability of starting a business increased between 75- 88%); and were more likely to create jobs (participants were 50% more likely to hire personnel) than the control group.



## 5. Enhance networking opportunities for young entrepreneurs

*“Having those networks of peers - other entrepreneurs going through it and mentors - is key.”*

Karen Greve Young: CEO, Futurepreneur

**Networks with other entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship support organisations and actors in entrepreneurial ecosystems, such as investors, advisors and potential customers, play a significant role in motivating young people to pursue entrepreneurship and helping them succeed.** Networks provide entrepreneurial role models and opportunities for peer learning. They also help young people to identify business opportunities, validate business ideas, find business partners and

access resources such as finance and talent. Building entrepreneurial networks is an important tool for strengthening youth entrepreneurs, as their lack of business and work experience tends to make them less connected to the business community and professional networks. Youth also tend to lack assets relevant to entrepreneurship, such as financial, human and social capital, making it more important to access assets through professional networks.

## Action steps

- Offer tips to young entrepreneurs on how to build effective and strategic networks in entrepreneurship training programmes.
- Create networking opportunities around policy interventions (e.g. entrepreneurship training, business development services) by facilitating regular interactions among participants and with business professionals (e.g. trainers, guest speakers).
- Facilitate linkages between young entrepreneurs and existing (general) entrepreneurship networks with dedicated outreach campaigns, partnerships with entrepreneurship support schemes (i.e. trainings, competitions, schools, etc.) and accessible network membership fees.
- Launch new networks for young entrepreneurs when there are none, ensuring links to the local business community, business networks, education institutions, business development centres and incubators, and youth entrepreneurship networks in other cities, regions and countries.
- Consider providing financial support to existing youth entrepreneurship networks to ensure their sustainability.
- Incentivise a wide range of support actors and business professionals to engage with youth entrepreneurship networks by organising workshops, sponsoring events and more. Governments could facilitate this by introducing network managers to potential partners and providing honorariums to partners if needed.
- Promote diversity in publicly supported youth entrepreneurship networks and their leadership as there is potential for peer networks to help build a more inclusive pipeline of young entrepreneurs (e.g. young women, people with disabilities).

## YEPA case studies

[JEUNE – Young Entrepreneurs Organisation of the European Union](#) (Europe) is a dedicated-youth entrepreneurship network that provides networking opportunities to young entrepreneurs who benefit from knowledge exchange, peer learning, access to new markets and new connections.

[The Young Entrepreneurs Association of Slovakia](#) (YEAS, Slovak Republic) aims to foster connection between young entrepreneurs (i.e. people under 40 years old) through peer learning, mentoring, networking, financial support for early-stage innovative businesses, business case studies and addressing barriers to entrepreneurship for youth.

[Moonshot Pirates](#) (Austria) is a global movement of impact-driven young leaders from over 150 countries that aims to equip youth with tools and resources to significantly increase the odds of solving the world's most pressing problems. It hosts challenges on topics such as climate change, food, health and mobility to empower young innovators to develop solutions as they receive much-needed mentoring and expert guidance.

[Federation of Hellenic Associations of Young Entrepreneurs](#) (Greece) unites young entrepreneurs and organisations and promotes co-operation with European and international networks through partnerships, by organising conferences and seminars as well as exchanges of young entrepreneurs to help them gain professional experience.

[ENSIE](#) represents and works to develop networks and federations of work integration social enterprises (WISEs) across Europe and works towards social and professional integration of disadvantaged people. They promote entrepreneurial skills specifically tailored to social value creation.

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## About the OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities

The OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities provides comparative statistics, analysis and capacity building for local and national actors to work together to unleash the potential of entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises, promote inclusive and sustainable regions and cities, boost local job creation, and support sound tourism policies.

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For more information on OECD work on social entrepreneurship, please visit website:  
[www.oecd.org/en/topics/social-economy-and-social-innovation.html](http://www.oecd.org/en/topics/social-economy-and-social-innovation.html)

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## About the European Union's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion develops and carries out the European Commission's policies on employment and social affairs, education and training. This includes, for example, support for more and better jobs through the European Employment Strategy, free movement of workers and coordination of social security schemes, and supporting social inclusion by supporting efforts to combat poverty and social exclusion, reform social protection systems, assess new demographic and social developments.

For more information on the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, please visit:  
[https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/employment-social-affairs-and-inclusion\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/employment-social-affairs-and-inclusion_en)

