

Industrial relations

Female entrepreneurship: Public and private funding



Female entrepreneurship: Public and private funding



European Foundation
for the Improvement
of Living and Working
Conditions

When citing this report, please use the following wording:

Eurofound (2019), *Female entrepreneurship: Public and private funding*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Author: Stavroula Demetriades, with support from Catherine Cerf

Research manager: Stavroula Demetriades

Eurofound project: Timely information for Eurofound (Topical updates): Gender funding for women entrepreneurs (190302)

Acknowledgements: The author would like to thank the peer reviewers of this report: Christine Aumayr Pintar, Martina Bisello and Isabella Biletta (Eurofound), Helena Morais Maceira, Barbara Limanowska and Zivile Macijauskiene (EIGE), and the Network of Eurofound Correspondents. Comments were also submitted by colleagues at DG JUST (Fatima Ribeiro Vilas Boas).

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union

Print: ISBN: 978-92-897-1995-7 doi:10.2806/652161 TJ-01-19-844-EN-C
PDF: ISBN: 978-92-897-1994-0 doi:10.2806/17117 TJ-01-19-844-EN-N

This report and any associated materials are available online at <http://eurofound.link/ef19031>

© European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2019

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

For any use or reproduction of photos or other material that is not under the Eurofound copyright, permission must be sought directly from the copyright holders.

Cover image: © Jacob Lund/Shutterstock

Maps, pp. 8, 18, 22: © GeoNames, HERE, MSFT, Microsoft, Navinfo, Thinkware Extract, Wikipedia

Any queries on copyright must be addressed in writing to copyright@eurofound.europa.eu

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) is a tripartite European Union Agency established in 1975. Its role is to provide knowledge in the area of social, employment and work-related policies according to Regulation (EU) 2019/127.

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

Telephone: (+353 1) 204 31 00

Email: information@eurofound.europa.eu

Web: www.eurofound.europa.eu

Contents

Key messages	1
Introduction	3
Main issues involved	3
Policy background	5
Objectives of the study	5
Methodology	6
Structure of the report	6
1 Private investment funds	7
Introduction	7
Overview of the private investment funds	7
Funds with no gender focus but investing in women-led enterprises	9
Investing in women-led enterprises: Feedback from fund managers	10
Summary	12
2 Public financial support	13
Identifying the problem	13
Public financial support initiatives in the EU and Norway	14
Types of financial support	14
Other state measures supporting female entrepreneurship	18
Other initiatives	24
Summary	24
3 Pathways to accessing funding	27
Grouping of countries in terms of support for female entrepreneurship	27
Views and opinions of associations and public institutions	28
Financial journey of female entrepreneurs	31
Feedback from female start-up entrepreneurs	32
Summary	34
4 Conclusions and policy pointers	35
Policy pointers	36
Bibliography	39
Annex 1: List of contributors	43
Annex 2: Glossary of terms	44
Annex 3: Coding system used	45
Annex 4: Private funds and female entrepreneurs interviewed	46

Key messages

Emergence of private funds with gender criteria in their investments

In the last few years, seven European Member States (Belgium, Czechia, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom (UK)) have seen the creation of 11 private funds which direct their investments into companies using gender criteria. These funds were created out of the need to invest in women-led enterprises and provide capital to address a social issue. This can contribute to creating a new funding model which may suit female entrepreneurs. The creation of 'gender lens' investment funds may tilt the gender equality playing field and support female entrepreneurship.

Funds investing in female entrepreneurs without explicit gender criteria

Investors directing large proportions of their investments towards women-led enterprises have been identified in a number of countries (such as Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands) without, however explicitly mentioning gender in their investment criteria. Some of these funds have clear social impact considerations, such as using finance to meet the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include gender equality as a goal.

Investing in women-led enterprises fills a market gap and makes a social impact

To exclude over 10 million female entrepreneurs in Europe from investment opportunities does not make economic sense, and it is not fair for society. The funds with gender considerations in their investments were created out of the need to fill a market gap: female entrepreneurs are underserved by venture capital, equity and angel investors. It is also a business opportunity for the funds, and, at the same time, the funds can make a social impact by leaving a gender footprint on the industry.

Women play a major role in the setting up of these funds

The majority of the 11 funds were created by female founders. They operate with a team of either solely female or diverse fund managers. Their approach to investing differs to the approach used by others in the industry, as they assess companies with concrete gender considerations among their hard criteria (such as commercial value, growth orientation, sales and profits).

Cross-border, global reach of the funds

Out of the 11 funds, 6 invest beyond the borders of the countries in which they are established and have a European (or global) focus. These are small and young

funds that are well connected with networks and the entrepreneurial ecosystem. This presents an opportunity for female entrepreneurs to access venture capital, equity capital or angel investment, even if their location is in another European country. The European single market creates opportunities for both investors and investees.

Amount of capital raised and sectors targeted

Of the 11 funds, three have already raised €68 million for investments in women-led enterprises, with amounts invested ranging from €10,000 to €20 million, open to all sectors of the economy. However, when targeting specific sectors, those tend to be technology sectors, information and communications technology (ICT), health-tech, education-tech, digital publishing and renewable energy.

State support for female entrepreneurship in the form of financing

Entrepreneurship programmes supporting female entrepreneurs consist of:

- grants, cash prizes and awards
- credit and credit guarantee schemes
- tax credits
- investment funding and business angel investment

Overall, 36 financial support schemes were identified in 16 Member States. The state investment in some of these programmes is estimated to be more than €300 million. Many countries provide grant and award schemes, as well as credit schemes. The largest number of such schemes is implemented in Italy, followed by Bulgaria, Ireland, France, Lithuania, Spain and Sweden. Investment funding and business angel investments are also provided by state organisations or in partnership with other organisations.

Other state support for female entrepreneurship

State authorities (in a broad sense, including regional and local authorities) support female entrepreneurship through training, mentoring and networking activities. The country mapping shows that 19 Member States offer such programmes and more than 300,000 women have participated in such activities, in particular training. However, childcare support is not always considered as part of the entrepreneurship policy measures.

Eradicating gender stereotypes in entrepreneurship

Female entrepreneurship needs to be promoted in the European economy and society, and it is important that gender stereotypes and socioeconomic barriers (such

as work–life balance for women and men, affordable childcare and access to networks) are addressed. Many women’s associations in Member States suggest that female entrepreneurial models should be promoted and the power of finance should be used to positively affect

gender roles in the economy and society. The latter can be done through facilitating better access to investment capital for female entrepreneurs and through promoting gender diversity in finance institutions where decisions on investments are made.

Introduction

The European Union needs to develop a strong and vibrant economic base, and entrepreneurship can contribute to achieving this goal. Entrepreneurship creates new companies and new markets, develops skills and has the potential to address some of the challenges the European economy is faced with. As female entrepreneurs represent a small proportion of the total number of entrepreneurs, in order to enhance equal opportunities for both women and men would require the removal of several obstacles. Some of the hurdles female entrepreneurs or would-be entrepreneurs are faced with are related to access to finance, access to the right networks, and access to information and advice.

Access to finance is an important factor in female entrepreneurship. While traditional means of financing (Carter and Rosa, 1998; Haines et al, 1999; Coleman, 2000; Lee and Denslow, 2005; Constantinidis et al, 2006; Carter et al, 2007; Coleman and Robb, 2009) have been previously examined, little research has been done on access to business angels and venture capital. Angel investment and venture capital are becoming increasingly important in the provision of not only capital but also mentorship, advice, access to the investors' networks, etc. which are critical for start-ups and growing companies. Often female entrepreneurship is seen through the prism of the gender pay gap, subsidised support to get women into work, fairness, gender diversity, access to credit, etc. However, investment opportunities through angel investors and venture capital in women-led enterprises have not been fully researched. The UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been an inspiration for gender lens investing as part of sustainability investment. Gender lens investing incorporates gender-related factors into investment decisions.

Women have been traditionally faced with the problem of attracting fewer angel and venture capital investments, despite running fundable companies. In view of these financing difficulties, there is some evidence of private investment funds being created in various global regions with the intention to invest in female entrepreneurs and cover the investment gap.

In recognising the problem of inadequate financing of female entrepreneurs, national strategies and European support tools can aid female entrepreneurship.

This report examines the prevalence of private funds created for investing in female entrepreneurs in the European Union and Norway. Additionally, it investigates public finance tools and public support schemes that remove barriers and enable women to become competent entrepreneurs.

Main issues involved

The growth of economies depends very much on their ability to create and sustain enterprises which can add value, create jobs and successfully compete at national and international levels. Entrepreneurship is supported by national government programmes through several policy measures that remove barriers, create incentives and assist capacity building. Such policy measures are promoted as a route to support female entrepreneurs to achieve economic independence and equality. These measures also contribute to sustainable economic growth.

Various definitions of entrepreneurship are used in the literature and policy documents. An OECD definition (OECD, 2008a) refers to entrepreneurship as 'identifying and acting upon (enterprising human activity) opportunities that create value (be that economic, cultural or social). As a result, entrepreneurs are those persons (business owners) who seek to generate value, through the creation or expansion of economic activity by identifying and exploiting new products, processes or markets.' The European Commission defines entrepreneurs as 'persons aged 15 years and older who work in their own business, farm or professional practice to make a profit, and spend time on the operation of a business, or are in the process of setting up a business'¹ (European Commission, 2014). For the purposes of this study, the Network of Eurofound Correspondents was asked to report on female entrepreneurship support measures in line with their national definitions and policy documents.

Number of female entrepreneurs in Europe

It is important to examine the number of female entrepreneurs in Europe to have a better appreciation of the issue. Studies and statistical data (European Commission, 2014) show that the proportion of active female entrepreneurs in 2012 was 31% (up from 28% in 2008), or 10.3 million, but with wide variation across countries.

The proportion of entrepreneurs in the total active labour force can be expressed using the entrepreneurship rate as an indicator for comparing entrepreneurial activities. Female entrepreneurship data (European Commission, 2014) show that in 2012 the EU28 entrepreneurship rate for women stood at 10% while the rate for men was higher (19%). The rate varies between countries, with the top four being Greece, Portugal, Italy and Poland. The lowest rates were noted in Estonia, Denmark, Sweden and Malta. Examining the trend in entrepreneurship rates between 2003 and 2012, the same analytical report notes that there has been a slight increase in the female entrepreneurship rate, from 10% to 10.4%, and a stagnation in male entrepreneurship.

1 This definition is also used for self-employed people in Eurostat's Labour Force Survey (LFS) database.

Recent Eurostat data (2019) on self-employed women in Europe show that their numbers remained relatively steady from 2016 to 2018. In 2018, the female self-employed figure for Europe stood at 10% (compared to 10.11% in 2017 and 10.27% in 2016) while the male self-employed figure was 18% (compared to 18.33% in 2017 and 18.03% in 2016). The lowest rates of self-employed women remain in Denmark (4.71%), Sweden (5.38%), Estonia (6.61%) and Germany (6.74%). Norway's rate was the lowest of all EU countries (4.14%). The countries with the highest rates were Greece (22.88%), Italy (15.25%), Poland (12.66%), the Netherlands (12.56%) and Spain (11.36%).

The boundaries between self-employment (with and without employees) and entrepreneurship are not always clear (Eurofound, 2017; EIGE, 2014, European Commission, 2012; OECD, 2017b). There are various studies that examine the reasons why the entrepreneurship rate for women is low (for example, socioeconomic reasons, access to finance and venture capital, inadequate business training, lack of self-confidence, lack of access to networks and mentors); however, this study focuses on access to financial capital.

Is access to investment capital a problem for female entrepreneurs?

Attracting capital is important for starting and growing a business. A literature review on women-owned companies flagged the issue of financing and access to financial networks (Brush, 1992). Another literature review covering the period 1992–2012 (Coleman and Robb, 2012) showed that, despite improvements in entrepreneurship rates, female entrepreneurs continue to face financial obstacles. The literature review also shows that there are clear issues regarding both demand and supply of capital for women-led enterprises. Compared to their male counterparts, female entrepreneurs do not raise enough capital at the start-up and the following phases of business growth 'even controlling for other firm and other characteristics' (Coleman and Robb, 2012). Moreover, they are often not on the radar of venture capital or angel funds.

Contrary to assertions that women may not have the ability or willingness to secure external capital, studies revealed that there were many 'fundable women' with skills and experience that have not been able to attract capital (Brush et al, 2004). An analysis of nearly 7,000 US-based companies backed by venture capital between 2011 and 2013 found that only 985 had female entrepreneurs on their teams (Brush et al, 2018). The researchers found that only 3% of venture capital funding was raised by female CEOs, or \$1.5 billion (€1.37 billion as at 10 October 2019) out of \$50.8 billion (€46.3 billion). The study demonstrates that for the same period, companies with all-men teams were four times more likely to receive venture capital than companies with even one woman on the team (Brush et al, 2018, pp. 121–122). Female entrepreneurs were more likely to receive later stage funding than early stage funding. Furthermore, female recipients of investments were more likely to be active in the software, healthcare and biotechnology sectors.

A lack of access to networks of investors (Brush, Greene et al, 2001; Davis et al, 2006), mentors, stereotypes, rules and norms of 'pitching' (Eagly and Karau, 2002) are all factors that can contribute to women receiving less venture capital. A lack of financing impedes growth opportunities, competitiveness and employment growth.

A recent European Commission study (European Commission, 2018b), based on the PitchBook tech companies database (PitchBook, 2017) and Zarya's report on female-founded technology companies (Zarya, 2017), reports that women-led start-ups managed to obtain 4.9% of all global venture capital deals in 2016 (an increase of 2% since 2006); however, average investments in women-led enterprises fell (0.7 points) between 2014 and 2016. The same study shows that the percentage of companies with at least one female founder that have reached venture capital deals in Europe is 16%. Even in countries with a large start-up base (such as the UK), women have a major disadvantage in getting venture capital funds or business angel investment compared to men. More specifically, the European Commission study indicates that UK-based male entrepreneurs are 86% more likely to obtain venture capital funds and 59% more likely to obtain angel investment than women are.

Data on the 10 largest rounds of investments in men and women-led enterprises (Zarya, 2018) suggest that the top male-led enterprise raised \$3 billion (€2.7 billion as at 2 October 2019) while the top woman-led enterprise raised \$165 million (€151 million as at 2 October 2019). The difference continues at the bottom of the list, with male-led enterprises attracting far more in capital compared to women-led enterprises. The type of business female founders set up includes a large number of biotechnology and medical device companies, which are among the sectors investors usually target (in other words, fundable businesses). On the other hand, companies with male founders attract large amounts of capital even for non-technology sectors (for example, WeWork is a real estate company). Therefore, the argument that female entrepreneurs set up companies in the 'wrong sectors' does not seem to hold in this case.

With mainstream private investors not particularly motivated to invest in women-led enterprises, a study from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania's Social Impact Initiative called *Project Sage* (Biegel et al, 2017) examined funds in the global private equity funds landscape with a gender lens. The study found 58 funds that raised and deployed \$1.3 billion (€1.2 billion) with a gender lens, most of them based in the US.

Against this background, it becomes apparent that female entrepreneurs are less likely to receive capital from investment funds. This hinders growth opportunities at a time where the European economies need them most. Research suggests that creating dedicated investment funds and business angels that include gender criteria in their investments is likely to address the problem of underfunding; however, studies have not mapped the European landscape.

Policy background

Entrepreneurship is promoted by the European Commission as a source of employment and economic growth. The gender equality legislation, for example, Directive 2010/41/EU on the equal treatment of men and women in self-employment, is supportive of female entrepreneurship. Gender equality is also one of the principles supported by the European Pillar of Social Rights under Chapter I: Equal opportunities and access to the labour market.

Female entrepreneurship is part of the strategic engagement for gender equality 2016–2019 (European Commission, 2016), which is the framework for the European Commission's work on gender equality. One of the five priority areas of the strategy aims to increase female labour market participation and the economic independence of both women and men. The strategy identifies concrete actions in connection with each priority area. The Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men², in its opinion on the future gender equality policy after 2019, highlights the role of entrepreneurship, and particularly female entrepreneurship. It acknowledges that it can improve EU productivity as it is a 'factor of innovation as well as of value and job creation'. More specifically, it recommends that the EU and Member States 'encourage women's entrepreneurship through better access to credit and funding, mentoring programs, or the creation of networks' (European Commission, 2018a).

The European Commission Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan (European Commission, 2013) recognises that entrepreneurship makes the economy more competitive and innovative, and sets out to support entrepreneurial opportunities for all groups (including women) and create the right business environment. The action plan recognises that women (among other groups) are underrepresented within the entrepreneurial population. Women represent a large pool of entrepreneurial potential in Europe. The action plan acknowledges that female entrepreneurs face additional challenges to the ones that male entrepreneurs encounter.

Accessing finance appears to be a critical challenge for women (Eurostat, 2007) as it can be a deterrent factor for starting up an enterprise or inhibit growth. While the Commission leads several initiatives to create Europe-wide networks for mentoring, business networking platforms, and so on, it also invites Member States to 'design and implement national strategies for women's entrepreneurship that aim at increasing the share of women-led companies'. Member States are also invited to produce gender-disaggregated data and annual reports, and to expand networks of mentors and encourage them to introduce policies to improve work-life balance (childcare and elderly care actions) making use of available EU funds.

The action plan acknowledges that there is a need to create a new European culture of entrepreneurship

and showcase role models and contributions of entrepreneurs to European prosperity. Furthermore, female entrepreneurship is supported through the Small Business Act with specific actions to improve access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in general. More targeted actions for female entrepreneurs include the European Community of Women Business Angels for Women Entrepreneurs and the EU Prize for Women Innovators. As documented on the European Commission's web page *Entrepreneurship and Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)*, a range of support tools is also available to facilitate networking and mentoring (European Commission, undated-a).

The European Commission report 'Women in the digital age' (European Commission, 2018b) reiterates the issue of women-led start-ups accessing capital. To increase the number of female entrepreneurs active in the ICT and digital sector, it is important to address their underfinancing.

An earlier European Parliament briefing also acknowledges that access to capital is crucial for entrepreneurship. It is indicative that 'in 2008, only 20.3% of EU businesses started with venture capital were run by women, and some analysts suggest women are asked for more financial assets as collateral' (European Parliament, 2013). As the briefing explains, some factors related to unequal capital may be that:

- women may have fewer assets
- they operate in sectors that are less capital intensive
- the presence of possible bias and the fact that women are less well represented in financing networks

Among the good practices to support female entrepreneurship, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) suggests developing diversified and targeted financial services and instruments for female entrepreneurs (EIGE, 2014). EIGE also recommends that authorities should work with banks and financial institutions to increase their awareness and understanding of female entrepreneurship and provide a more integrated approach to funding.

Lastly, one of the aims of the new Horizon Europe programme (the EU research and innovation programme for the period 2021–2027) is to boost the EU's innovation, competitiveness and jobs, and it emphasises the need to become more entrepreneurial. Female entrepreneurship activities have already been supported by Horizon 2020 (the programme's predecessor) and will be further encouraged in the new programming period.

Objectives of the study

The present study aims to accomplish the following:

- to investigate the incidence of European private investment funds with specific gender criteria
- to examine public financing initiatives

² The Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men helps the European Commission prepare and implement activities aimed at promoting equal opportunities for women and men.

- to identify public support schemes that strengthen the capabilities of female entrepreneurs
- to suggest ways to support female entrepreneurs

Methodology

The study is based on national contributions from all EU Member States and Norway as provided by the Network of Eurofound Correspondents.

A questionnaire was circulated to all correspondents whose response was provided in the form of a national report. The objective of the questionnaire was to capture information on:

- the incidence of private funds that include gender among their investment criteria
- public sector schemes for financing female entrepreneurs (public sector is meant in a broad sense, covering regional and local authorities as well)
- other public support measures (such as training, mentoring, networking, childcare, etc.)
- views of associations and other stakeholders (for instance, public institutions and social partners) and relevant national research findings

Additionally, to assist with a better understanding of the findings of the study, interviews with private funds identified in the national reports and female entrepreneurs were conducted in three countries: the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK. These countries were selected out of the seven Member States with an existing private fund in place, based on availability for interview within the timeline of the study.

Interviews were conducted between April and May 2019. Overall, three funds were selected for interview: Indecap Q30 (Sweden), Karmijn Kapitaal (the Netherlands) and Angel Academe (UK). Lastly, four female entrepreneurs (founders and co-founders) agreed to be interviewed, representing Eatit (Sweden), Doppel (UK), Friendbase (Sweden) and Mantelaar (the Netherlands).

The female entrepreneurs were selected through contacts with women's associations and public institutions (for

example, Vinnova in Sweden) at the national level and through private funds identified in the study. Private funds and business angels have a list of women-led enterprises in their portfolio which was used as an access point. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the founders or co-founders of three private funds and business angels, and four female entrepreneurs. The interview topics for the funds included the following: specific gender-related criteria for investments, reasons for investing in women-led enterprises and sectors, amounts raised, the proportion of female managers in the fund, industry barriers in investing in women-led enterprises (if any), and suggestions for improvement. Female entrepreneurs on the other hand, were asked questions regarding funding barriers, the importance of external financing, the norms of pitching and getting feedback from investors, plans for the future as a result of funding, amounts raised through investment rounds, public support received and suggestions for improvement.

Structure of the report

The report consists of four chapters.

- Chapter 1 presents the national findings of the situation on private investment funds with gender criteria used in their investment decisions. It also presents findings based on interviews with founders of private funds.
- Chapter 2 outlines public financing schemes in support of female entrepreneurship and other public support measures such as training, networking, mentoring, childcare, etc.
- Chapter 3 discusses the findings, taking into consideration the interviews with female entrepreneurs, and the road to accessing finance for female entrepreneurs.
- Chapter 4 provides conclusions and policy pointers.

Unless otherwise noted, all figures in the report are the author's own calculations based on data from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents.

1 Private investment funds

Introduction

Private investors look for opportunities to invest their assets in potentially successful and profitable companies in the hope of finding the next big founder – the next Apple or Amazon – that shapes the market landscape. With the media focus on celebrity founders, who in most cases are male, there is an unconscious bias towards male founders and entrepreneurs. Considering that women are also underrepresented as investment managers in private funds, this bias may be perpetuated until social and economic actors realise the real costs of this.

In the last few years, some private funds have realised that female founders are not always well served and there is a market gap when it comes to investing in women-led enterprises. These may include enterprises founded or co-founded by women, or enterprises with a female CEO or a gender diverse management team. Often, such investors are set up by female fund managers (venture capital, private equity, business angels, etc.). While this is a positive development, it should be made clear at the outset that gender equality is not a women's issue. Gender inequalities are structural and should be addressed by private (as well as public) institutions.

This study was launched to investigate the European landscape regarding private funds investing in female-run enterprises using specific gender-related criteria. Funds were included if their approach to gender lens investment included any of the following criteria, which is part of the coding system used in the study.

- **Quantified Gender Mandate** refers to investment based on specific female metrics (for instance, a 50/50 gender balance of founders, a large percentage of female founding members or no less than a certain percentage).
- **Gender Mandate** refers to investment based on publicly stated criteria on gender (for instance, ensuring that founding members include women).
- **Gender Consideration** is applied in investments (for instance, some of the founding members are female).

The above criteria are adapted from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania's Social Impact Initiative, Project Sage (Biegel et al, 2017). In their global mapping, the Wharton School project identified 58 funds with a gender lens (the majority of which are in North America) that raised over \$1.3 billion (€1.2 billion as at 8 October 2019). It also identified several gender lens investors located in other countries, such as Japan (for example, Dreyfus Japan Womenomics Fund), India (IndusInd Bank Limited) and Switzerland (the Global Gender Equality UCITS Exchange Traded Fund), among others.

As the focus is on gender lens investing, funds that do not fall under this description are reported separately, insofar as they have made a significant number of investments in women-led enterprises, even without a specific gender lens listed on their investment criteria. To get a better understanding of their motives, interviews were conducted with fund managers who have denoted gender among their investment criteria.

Overview of the private investment funds

Funds with a gender focus

A first review of the European countries and markets' landscape through the Network of Eurofound Correspondents reveals that 11 private investment funds were identified with a gender lens operating in seven Member States (Belgium, Czechia, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the UK), as shown in Figure 1 below. Spain has a large concentration of such funds (three). Regarding the type of investment funds, the study identified four equity funds, four venture capital and investment funds, two business angels or angel investment organisations and one crowd fund. With two exceptions, all funds were created in the last five years and a large number (five) were created in 2018, which may suggest that in a recovering economic environment with more investment opportunities, they have emerged as a response to a market need or a need to make a social impact through the financing of female entrepreneurs.

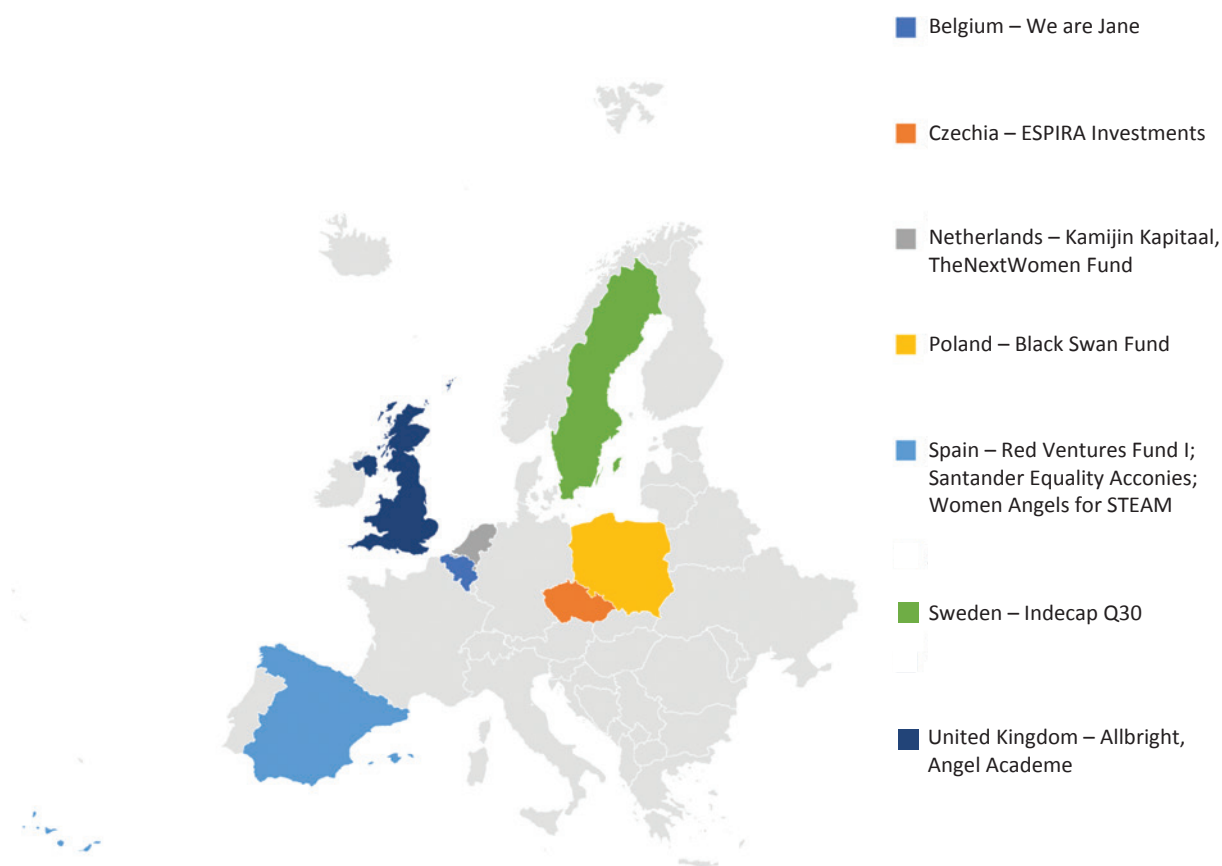
It is indicative that the fund managers interviewed in the context of this study (see section on 'Investing in women-led enterprises: Feedback from fund managers' on p. 10) reported that the reason for setting up such a fund is to fill a market gap and make a positive impact on the economic results of the companies they invest in. Fund managers pointed out that investors in venture capital, private equity or angels are mostly men who are more likely to invest in male-run enterprises. With an increasing number of female founders, fund managers considered that ignoring a part of the market would not be a good business practice.

Gender approach to investment

A specific aspect explored in this study is the gender approach to investment taken by the private funds. Most of the funds have a Quantified Gender Mandate in their investment criteria.³ This means that when selecting investments, they investigate whether a company has a certain proportion of female managers, founders or shareholders. Using a more sophisticated algorithm, some funds investigate the increase in the number of women in leading positions. Some use a much more elaborate list of criteria, for instance the proportion of female top managers and board members or the proportion of

3 As per the coding system above and in Annex 3.

Figure 1: Countries with private funds investing in female-run enterprises



Note: While there are several European funds investing in both male and female businesses, the funds presented here explicitly use gender among their investment criteria.

intermediate and other female managers and female employees. Furthermore, in their assessment criteria some take into consideration the company report on the salary gap between men and women and the equal opportunities policy within the organisation. Many funds apply a gender mandate requesting that women are among the founding members. Only 2 of the 11 funds apply a generic gender consideration (in which some of the founding members are women).

Fund size and investment amounts raised

Overall, data on the size of the funds and investment amounts raised are patchy. Information on the four funds (in Czechia, Poland, Spain and the UK) that did publish such data suggests that they collectively target €95 million for investments in female-run enterprises. The amount raised in such investments by three funds (in Belgium, Spain and the UK) that made this information public is €68 million. However, the full amount raised by all 11 funds far exceeds the above figure. Publicly available information on the minimum investment shows that this can range between €10,000 and €20 million.

Sectors targeted

Sectoral considerations have been frequently raised in connection with the financing of female businesses. It has been argued that female entrepreneurs tend to be present in specific sectors and this may explain their difficulty in attracting capital. The funds examined here cover in their majority all sectors. A large number shows preference for certain sectors with a strong technological focus such as information and communication technologies (ICT), e-commerce, digital publishing, fintech, health technology and education technology. Investments in renewable energy are among those favoured, as well as fashion and design.

With the rise of social enterprises⁴ in many Member States, and a large proportion of women founding them or working in top managerial positions, the study sought to investigate whether private funds are open to investments in social enterprises. Apart from two cases (the Polish fund and one Spanish fund), all the funds could possibly invest in social enterprises if they satisfy their investment criteria.

⁴ A social enterprise is an operator in social economy whose main objective is to have a social impact rather than make a profit for their owners or shareholders (European Commission, 2011; Eurofound, 2019).

Funds with links or support from the public sector and the EU

A total of 6 out of 11 funds saw this as an opportunity to invest in a niche market (a part of the market lacking access to finance) – women-led enterprises – and this consideration played a major role in their decision to set up such a business. This confirms the assertion that there is a business case (beyond and above the fairness and diversity agenda) in setting up funds investing in female entrepreneurs. Furthermore, social impact considerations were also part of their decision-making process.

Having identified the market need for founding private funds, some (four) of them sought public support (for instance, the Polish fund obtained support through the Polish Development Fund). Others, such as the Belgian, Czech and Dutch funds had access to EU support (for instance, through the European Investment Fund programmes or the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme). This finding suggests that public and EU policies promoting gender equality and economic growth have played a positive role in the creation of funds with a gender focus.

Female investors and managers in the funds

Research studies (Becker-Blease and Sohl, 2007; Brush et al, 2014; Dawson et al, 2016; Rock and Grant, 2016; IFC, 2019) indicate that female investors and fund managers may apply a different approach to assessing applications for financing submitted by female entrepreneurs. Female fund managers are more likely to appeal to women entrepreneurs and to consider sectors that female entrepreneurs set up their business (Gompers et al, 2014; Bloomberg, 2018; IFC, 2019). Gender-diverse venture capital and equity firms tend to have a larger number of women-led enterprises in their portfolio (Brush et al, 2014; IFC, 2019). Therefore, this study sought to investigate the number or proportion of female fund managers in the funds that make investments in female-run enterprises. The findings are illuminating, showing that four funds in Belgium, the Netherlands, Poland and Spain, operate with teams of entirely female fund managers (100% female). Another four funds had mixed teams but with a high proportion of female fund managers (between 50% and 80% female). Overall, the proportion of female fund managers in the funds identified was fairly high, ranging between 50% and 100%. This stresses the importance of women in decision-making positions in investment funds and more broadly in other finance institutions.

Cross-border or born-European investment funds

This study found that 6 out of 11 funds are born-European or global in nature. These funds are in Belgium, Czechia, the Netherlands and Spain. Their investments cross narrow national borders and cover neighbouring countries, all of Europe, or in some cases beyond Europe. All three Spanish funds identified in this mapping exercise operate across Europe or globally. The nature of these businesses and perhaps the geography may have a role to play as all six funds are looking for such cross-border investments in women-led enterprises or gender-diverse

teams. They operate in an area where they have identified a clear market need. It is worth mentioning that these are small and young companies in a growth phase with a vision that goes beyond their national boundaries. This vision and orientation may be demand-driven as they may not always find suitable investees to comply with their gender investment criteria.

Managers of such funds indicated (see next section) that it is not always possible to find enough companies meeting their criteria to invest in. It is notable that all these funds are well connected, with networks and links with the entrepreneurial ecosystem. The founders driving this vision are well-educated and experienced professionals in the finance industry (as is the case in all of the funds examined here). Some use sophisticated technology and criteria to assess companies; these are also socially innovative companies. The business model for such funds appears to match the born-global model (Mandl and Patrini, 2017). The creation of such cross-border, European funds has great potential to impact on investments in women-led enterprises, as experience from one country can be shared with others. Such initiatives should be encouraged by networks for female entrepreneurs, public support agents, and so on.

Funds with no gender focus but investing in women-led enterprises

Through this initial mapping, it was made clear that there are private funds that invest in women-led enterprises but do not explicitly mention gender in their investment criteria. These were not at the core of this study.

National correspondents have indicated that there are private funds without any publicly stated gender-related criteria embedded in their investments which have nevertheless provided investment capital to many female entrepreneurs. Countries with such funds include, France, Germany and the Netherlands.

The top three investors financing women-led enterprises in 2018 in France are Bpifrance, Kima Ventures and Angel Square. The latter fund was reported to devote 28% of its investment to women-led start-ups. In France, some actors in the financial sector are reportedly prepared to launch new funds with a gender lens within 2019 and 2020, which raises expectations for a higher number of deals for female entrepreneurs in France.

Two funds in Germany (HV Holtzbrinck Ventures and Acton Capital) were found to be the ones investing in the ‘most successful female businesses’ (according to the German national correspondent).

The Dutch investment fund UNIIQ has indicated the founders’ conviction to be more gender aware in its investment options and has been actively seeking opportunities to invest in female-run enterprises. Since the publication of a study on female entrepreneurs conducted by researchers at the Free University of Amsterdam in 2018 (De Ondernemer, 2018), there has been a widespread recognition in the sector that women receive much less

financing on average. This demonstrates the role that national studies, data and statistics can play in raising awareness in society and economy.

Moreover, three funds (Argos Wityu, Waterland and Inventures II) were identified in Belgium as having social impact considerations, particularly based on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) criteria for

investing. The funds using SDGs criteria aim to reconcile profitability and sustainability considerations when making their investment decisions. While gender is not explicitly mentioned, gender equality is one of the SDGs and this is assessed in conjunction with other criteria. ESG criteria are used by funds and investors to make investments with impact.⁵ The above-mentioned funds are equity, venture capital funds with operations in Belgium and the Netherlands, but also in other EU Member States.

Dutch equity fund: Karmijn Kapitaal

Organisation: Founded in 2010, Karmijn Kapitaal is a small organisation founded by three women. The fund has a 50/50 split between male and female managers.

Gender approach to investment: The fund invests in SMEs led by a diverse team. The enterprise must have at least 25% men and 25% women on the leadership team, have been operating for at least five years, and have a turnover of at least €5 million. By using management profiling techniques, the fund assesses the gender ratio and diversity in the management and leadership teams.

Reasons for gender-focused investment: A market scan by the founders showed that there were no other similar funds in existence. Additionally, using research-based evidence (national studies) and market input, they realised that female entrepreneurs have difficulties accessing external financing. Female entrepreneurs have been providing pitches to predominantly male investors with a different approach to investment than that of female investors.

Capital and investments: The funds under management have a total value of €135 million. The fund invests amounts between €2 million and €12.5 million, and has four women-led companies in its portfolio.

Investing in women-led enterprises: Feedback from fund managers

Investment vehicles such as venture capital, equity funds and business angels meet with entrepreneurs, often at the beginning of their entrepreneurial activity, but also several times during their entrepreneurial journey. In this way, investors make a significant impact on the future of

the enterprise they invest in. By turning their attention to female entrepreneurs or gender-diverse management teams, investors can change the investment landscape and provide essential capital to female entrepreneurs who might otherwise lack this support.

To get a better understanding of the reasons some funds focus on gender lens investing while seeking profitable projects, interviews were conducted with the founders of three private investment funds and angel investors.

Swedish fund: Indecap Q30

Organisation: Set up in 2017, Indecap is a fairly new independent capital provider and the first fund focusing on female leadership in the Nordic region. Indecap is a small organisation of 15 people with women co-founders. Half of the investment managers are women.

Gender approach to investment: Indecap focuses its investments in companies with a high proportion of female leaders. Each company listed on the Stockholm Stock Exchange is rated using an algorithm. The fund only invests in the 30 companies with the best rates (in terms of female leadership), as assessed through their algorithm.

Reasons for gender-focused investment: According to one of the fund managers interviewed, the private investment industry in Sweden has overlooked female leadership when assessing companies for investment; there is more focus on sales figures. Creating this tool makes it easier for investors to take gender equality and female leadership into account in their investment decisions.

Capital and investments: The total capital raised is €4.7 million. Individuals can invest in this fund through large banks. There are always 30 companies in the fund portfolio (those with the best scores as per their investment criteria – see main text).

⁵ Environmental criteria refer to the company's environmental impact record while social criteria are used with a view to assess the company's relationships with employees, the supply chain and communities. Lastly, governance criteria are the way investors assess company leadership, executive pay, shareholders' rights, results of audits and internal controls, etc.

The funds are located in three countries: the Netherlands (Karmijn Kapitaal), Sweden (Indecap Q30) and the UK (Angel Academe). Two of the interviewees are female founders and one is a male co-founder.

Reasons for investing in women-led companies

It is interesting to note that funds invest in women-led enterprises with a view to making a positive impact on female entrepreneurship. Moreover, and as reported by the fund managers, the creation of these funds comes as a response to a market need: providing capital to enterprises not well served by the market. They make it clear that they want to make a positive impact on the revenues and profits of the companies they invest in. These investors also have an interest in receiving a return on their investments. This means that investing in women-led enterprises (using different assessment criteria) can be a profitable business for investors, and at the same time the female entrepreneurs can grow their businesses with the injection of much needed capital. Undeniably, not all well-financed enterprises experience growth, become profitable and create employment; however, securing financing can tilt the playing field and potentially accelerate change in the entrepreneurship landscape.

'We think we are great at equality, but there is still a lot to accomplish here in Sweden too.'

Indecap fund manager (Sweden)

Investing is not a linear process; companies can grow, shrink and then grow again. Female entrepreneurs (as well as male entrepreneurs) may access several rounds of seed or early stage funding. Angel funding can provide relatively small amounts at the early stage of an enterprise's existence and, at a later stage, a series of venture capital injections can be raised. There are loops in the financing process which allow for several rounds of early stage financing, which can be a very long journey for the companies. Not many female entrepreneurs go through this financing process for many reasons, including:

- lack of access to such networks
- lack of familiarity with the financing process
- risk adversity
- discouragement due to unconscious bias by investors

As all the funds included in the study are rather new, they have a small number of women-led enterprises in their portfolios (between 4 and 30 women-led companies, although they also have others with mixed ownership). One fund has set a ceiling to the number of enterprises to be invested in (the best 30 companies that are listed in the stock exchange). They are all set up either entirely by women or co-founded by women and men (a 50/50 split). Female fund managers have first-hand experience of the difficulties female entrepreneurs are faced with when seeking financing and this is one of the factors that motivates their business decisions.

UK business angel: Angel Academe

Organisation: Angel Academe is a new and small organisation with a female and male co-founder.

Gender approach to investment: The chief criterion for investment is that the company must have at least one woman as a founder, and preferably operate in the digital technology industry. They organise their own pitching events for female entrepreneurs following a pre-screening. They also organise training sessions for potential female investors.

Reasons for gender-focused investment: Before setting up the company, the female founder-investor observed that, more often, she was surrounded by male investors. It was also evident that most of the venture capital and angel funding goes to male-run companies. The organisation aims to attract more female investors investing their money in female-run companies (although they have also invested in male-run companies). Own observations show that companies with female founders on their list perform very well.

Capital and investments: As this is not a fund, all investments are made by individual investors. Individual angels invest between £10,000 (€11,000 as at 4 October 2019) and £100,000 (€112,000), while the group can invest between £150,000 and £250,000 (€169,000–€281,000).

Barriers to investing in women-led enterprises

With a well-established gap in the market for investors, the questions that naturally arise are 'why are there not more investors?' and 'what are the barriers?'. A variety of reasons have been suggested by the respondents, including a lack of information on financing options available to female entrepreneurs. Attracting well-informed investors to invest in female entrepreneurs can also be a challenge. In some cases (for instance, in the case of the business angel), efforts are concentrated on raising awareness among female investors themselves. Women share a part of national wealth, which can be invested in women-led enterprises.

According to the Dutch equity fund, women may not have access to networks that can facilitate financing or may not be as attentive to its importance.

Additionally, another barrier to investment identified by the Swedish fund is the lack of companies with an equal distribution of men and women on boards. This indicates that companies do not implement gender equality principles.

'More gender diversity in fund managers is needed'

Investment manager at Karmijn Kapitaal
(The Netherlands)

Filling the need for fund manager diversity

Having a gender diverse group of fund managers makes it easier to reach out to female entrepreneurs and brings a more balanced view to the company's approach to investment. In evaluating investment portfolios and individual enterprises, both hard metrics (such as commercial value, growth orientation, sales and profits) and soft metrics (for instance, effectiveness of management and well-being of employees, ESG values and risk management) are taken into consideration. Each enterprise is unique, so each application for funding must be assessed individually. By being diverse themselves, the funds also set an example to enterprises. It is also noted that female entrepreneurs may feel more at ease when addressed by women and diverse groups of investors who apply a different approach to investment.

Improving financing opportunities for female entrepreneurs

Although very useful, support measures such as training, awareness raising, mentoring and networking are limited in what they can achieve. To improve financing opportunities for female entrepreneurs, it is also necessary to target the investors' side, such as venture capital and equity fund providers, and to encourage more female fund managers and investors to get involved. More similar funds need to be created. It is also strongly advocated that more diversity in fund manager teams, from the large institutions to smaller investors, would be very beneficial.

'All initiatives focus on fostering supply and performance of female entrepreneurs, but there should also be a focus on finding investors, female investors who would invest in those female entrepreneurs.'

Angel Academe founder

Summary

This chapter reviewed the incidence of private investment funds with gender among their investment criteria in the EU Member States and Norway. As gender considerations may be too broad to measure, this study established

specific measurable criteria for the private funds to be included. More specifically, it included funds that, among their gender-related investment criteria, had metrics requiring a certain number of female founders, publicly stated criteria on gender, and gender considerations such as some of the founding members being women.

The study identified both business angel and venture capital funds. The mapping exercise shows that seven EU Member States (Belgium, Czechia, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the UK) have 11 funds with a gender focus in place. These are relatively new funds that, geographically, cover all of Europe. The funds are principally created by women investors or fund managers with the intention to invest in female entrepreneurs as well as cover the gap in the market. In certain cases, the public sector and EU policies played a supporting role in their establishment.

When making investments, these funds apply the usual hard criteria (such as sales, revenues, profits and markets), but they also look for female CEOs, a certain proportion of women in the management team, female founders, and so on. Data provided by 3 out of 11 funds indicate that they have already raised a total of €68 million. They are open to all economic sectors, but there is a preference for the ICT, technology and renewable energy sectors. A total of 6 out of the 11 funds are investing in cross-border, born-European or born-global companies. Founders of these funds see a clear business opportunity for investing in female entrepreneurs, while at the same time making a social impact.

A common barrier is that there is a lack of information on financing options and lack of investors, and particularly female investors. Being an all-female or gender diverse fund provides a different approach to investing in female entrepreneurs. However, it is important to note that gender equality is not just a women's issue: it is a structural problem. Private organisations (as well as public ones) have a responsibility to prevent and redress gender-based discrimination.

2 Public financial support

When the private market fails to provide adequate financing to female entrepreneurs, state initiatives (and local authorities) often fill the gap. Many countries indicate insufficient financial support as an issue for female entrepreneurs. Market failures require state intervention for providing information, the necessary funding, capacity building, etc.

Identifying the problem

National studies have already identified the problem of financing for female entrepreneurs and made recommendations for state intervention or other institutional and industry support. Below are some examples of the findings by country.

Bulgaria: The Ministry of Economy of Bulgaria and the non-government sector have been working on a draft strategy for promotion of women entrepreneurship (still ongoing). The report of the working group of the ministry clearly referred to women entrepreneurs having restricted access to finance and management training.

Croatia: A Croatian study (European Parliament, 2017) denotes that women tend to receive smaller grants than men. For example, it mentions that 'while women accounted for 41.1% of the total number of grants, their share in the total amount of grants awarded was only 19.4%'.

Denmark: The Danish Growth Fund (2018), a large fund for entrepreneurship in Denmark (a country with no public schemes), has looked at how well women are represented among companies financed by the fund since 2000. The findings indicate that only 4% of the companies have been financed with venture capital, but it concludes that businesses with women in leading roles generally require less funding (for reasons relating to demand). The national press (Børsen, 2017; Skovhus, 2017; Schacht, 2018) suggests that only a small proportion of venture capital is allocated to start-ups with one or more women in the team of founders.

Germany: Accessing angel and venture capital is considered an issue by the German Female Founders Monitor (Kollmann et al, 2018) which also notes that women use bank loans more often than men. Additionally, the study found that women generate most of their revenue locally.

Ireland: An OECD study (2016a) observed that women account for just one quarter of recipients of Local Enterprise Office financial support.

Latvia: A survey on women in business carried out by the association LĪDERE found that 77% of female

entrepreneurs have started their businesses by using personal savings, 16% using bank loans, 11% using financial assistance from family and friends, and 9% using EU funds (Latvijas Fakti, 2017). The microcredit scheme run by the Latvian Association of Rural Women (Bauska Rural Women's Club *Apvārsnis*) for women in rural areas provided access to credit and equipped women with more business experience.

Lithuania: Funding problems are flagged in the Lithuanian report (Entrepreneurship Promotion Fund, 2018), which assesses the performance of the loans granted. Despite the extra points awarded to female applicants, only about 30% of beneficiaries are women.

Luxembourg: Female entrepreneurs in Luxembourg (Acket et al, 2011) are faced with administrative and institutional difficulties when applying for funding and often too many guarantees are required for credit to be issued.

Netherlands: Insufficient private support is indicated in the Dutch study (De Ondernemer, 2018), which found that while 35% of entrepreneurs are women, the private financing rate is disproportionately low, at 1.6%.

Norway: The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs argues that women still carry a disproportionate responsibility at home (Bufdir, undated). A report conducted for the Norwegian government recommends establishing a publicly supported female investment fund (Grünfeld et al, 2019). Among other proposals, it suggests making the welfare system more open to entrepreneurs by establishing more comprehensive mentor programmes, removing competitive disadvantages in industries usually targeted by female entrepreneurs, and so on.

Poland: Survey results in Poland demonstrate that 43% of self-employed women in the survey did not have enough capital to set up their firms (Misiak, 2015). Polish female entrepreneurs tend to receive loans for a shorter period than men (Rahman et al, 2017).

Romania: Limited access to financing in Romania is considered a barrier to female entrepreneurship (Dodescu et al, 2011).

Slovakia: In Slovakia, an OECD study (2017b) recommended to increase the availability of start-up financing.

United Kingdom: A UK survey of SME finance (Cosh et al, 2008) found that women had difficulties applying for equity finance, while another study found that female investors are marginally more likely to invest in women-owned businesses (Harrison and Mason, 2007). Women on crowdfunding platforms, including CircleUp and Kickstarter, are on average more successful than male-led firms (Stengal, 2015).

Public financial support initiatives in the EU and Norway

The national mapping exercise identified 36 financial support initiatives (through different schemes) in 16 Member States. Public financial support includes programmes funded by the state (ministries), regional authorities (for instance, in Spain) or local authorities (for instance in Sofia, Bulgaria). Additionally, many initiatives (for example, policy schemes in Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Ireland, Lithuania, Slovakia and Spain) are co-financed by the European Structural and Investment Funds and the EU initiative Horizon 2020 or other EU programmes. Most of the schemes are specifically addressed to women, while some include other groups but explicitly mention women among the target groups. Table 1 presents an overview of the state support programmes.

Types of financial support

An analysis of these programmes shows that financial support falls into four categories:

- grants, cash prizes and awards
- credit (loans) and credit guarantee schemes
- tax credits
- investment funding and business angel investment

Grants, cash prizes and awards: These are often provided to a specific target group, for instance, women with a business idea or a start-up. State and local authorities may also target would-be entrepreneurs among groups such as unemployed women, women with disabilities and cooperatives with a prevailing female population (Italy). In Ireland, charities and social enterprises run by women

Table 1: Public financial support programmes in EU Member States and Norway

Country	Name of financial support programme	Type of financial support (equity, grant, credit guarantee, loan, etc.)	Initiating organisation
Bulgaria	Operational Programme ‘Innovation and Competitiveness’ 2014–2020 (‘Promotion of Entrepreneurship’ grant)	Grant (priority points for female entrepreneurs)	Ministry of Economy
	Main warranty scheme of the Municipal Guarantee Fund for SMEs (MGFSME)	Credit guarantee (in cooperation with the partnering banks it covers part of the credit risk and secures up to 50% of the amount of the loan principal or up to BGN 100,000 (€51,129 as at 7 October 2019))	MGFSME
	Financing Innovative Start-ups Programme (municipality initiated)	Credit guarantee	MGFSME
	‘Accelerator Start-up Sofia’ programme (municipality initiated)	Grant	Sofia municipality and the MGFSME
Cyprus	Scheme for the Enhancement of Women Entrepreneurship (Σχέδιο Ενίσχυσης της Γυναικείας Επιχειρηματικότητας)	Grant (maximum of €70,000 for enterprises in manufacturing and €50,000 in all other sectors)	Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry
Croatia	Loan Programme for the Financing of Female Entrepreneurship (Programi kreditiranja poduzetništva žena)	Loan with lower interest rate	Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development (Hrvatska banka za obnovu i razvoj, HBOR)
France	Garantie EGALITE Femmes, formerly known as ‘Fonds de garantie à l’initiative des femmes’ (co-financed by EU funds)	Credit guarantee covers a maximum of 80% of the loan amount, up to a maximum of €50,000	France Active
	Regional plan to reduce inequalities in the entrepreneurial environment (in cooperation with banks)	Access to finance (credit)	Nouvelle-Aquitaine region
	Bpifrance (joint public–private initiative)	Investment fund	Bpifrance
Germany	Micromezzanine fund Germany (Mikromezzaninfond Deutschland)	Grant	Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy
	Innovative measures for women in rural areas (Innovative Maßnahmen für Frauen im Ländlichen Raum)	Grant	State of Baden-Württemberg
Greece	Creation of a new financial instrument for strengthening the activity of Greek businesses in the Balkans and south-eastern Europe	Credit and credit guarantee	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Hungary	Budapest Enterprise Agency (BEA) microcredit programme (Mikrohitel)	Interest rate subsidy for microloans for women	BEA

Table 1: (Continued)

Country	Name of financial support programme	Type of financial support (equity, grant, credit guarantee, loan, etc.)	Initiating organisation
Ireland	Fuelling Ambition Roadshow	Cash prize (€2,000 for winner of pitch competition at each roadshow, as well as mentorship classes and membership of Network Ireland)	Enterprise Ireland and Network Ireland, in partnership with the Entrepreneurs Academy
	Competitive Start Fund	Equity investment (€1 million; up to €50,000 investment in equity fund)	Enterprise Ireland
	Microfinance Ireland	Loans (up to €25,000)	Local Enterprise Office; Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation; Science Foundation Ireland
	Women of Ireland Fund (Mná na hÉireann)	Cash grants (between €50,000 and €100,000 per year, over three years)	Government of Ireland and Bank of America
Italy	New enterprises at zero interest rate (Nuove imprese a tasso zero)	Loan and credit guarantee	Invitalia
	Smart&Start Italia	Loan and credit guarantee	Invitalia
	Call for grants for SMEs with prevailing female participation (Bando per l'erogazione di contributi alle PMI a prevalente partecipazione femminile)	Grant	Veneto region
	Enterprise creation by young people, women and beneficiaries of social safety nets (Creazione impresa giovanile, femminile e dei destinatari di ammortizzatori sociali)	Loan (zero-interest loans for investment projects between €8,000 and €30,000)	Tuscany region
	New enterprise initiatives (Nuove iniziative d'impresa, NIDI)	Grant and loan (for projects between €10,000 and €150,000); this covers up to 100% of expenses up to €50,000, 90% of those between €50,000 and €100,000, and 80% of those between €100,000 and €150,000; it provides a grant covering 50% of the eligible investment expenses and a loan covering 50% of the expenses at the EU reference interest rate	Puglia region
Lithuania	The global grant instrument 'Business Start-up Subsidies' (Visuotinės dotacijos priemonė 'Subsidijos verslo pradžiai')	Grant (partial compensation of labour costs)	Investment and Business Guarantees (UAB 'Investicijų ir verslo garantijos', INVEGA) in collaboration with the LKU Credit Union Group (LKU kredito unijų grupė)
	Entrepreneurship Promotion Programme 2014–2020 (Programa 'Verslumo skatinimas 2014–2020')	Loans (for start-ups and newly established enterprises)	INVEGA in collaboration with the LKU Credit Union Group
	Rural development programme 2014–2020 (Lietuvos kaimo plėtros 2014–2020 metų programa) (women are the priority group)	Grants	National Paying Agency under the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania (Nacionalinė mokėjimo agentūra prie Žemės ūkio ministerijos)
Malta	Micro Invest	Credit scheme (companies benefiting from this measure are supported through a tax credit calculated as a percentage of eligible expenditures and wage costs; the maximum eligible tax credits per single undertaking was capped at €50,000 but women-led enterprises, such as enterprises with 50% female ownership, get an increase of €20,000)	Malta Enterprise

(Continued)

Table 1: (Continued)

Country	Name of financial support programme	Type of financial support (equity, grant, credit guarantee, loan, etc.)	Initiating organisation
Poland	Loan fund for women (Fundusz pożyczkowy dla kobiet)	Low interest loan (€116,260 in total)	Polish Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Technology (Ministerstwo Przedsiębiorczości i Technologii) and the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (Polska Agencja Rozwoju Przedsiębiorczości, PARP) (a state agency)
Slovakia	'CrossEUWBA' project (enhancing the cross-sector emergence of new women business angels across Europe)	Angel investments	Slovak Business Agency (SBA)
Spain	Subsidy for establishment as self-employed (Ayudas para convertirse en autónomos)	Grants (up to €10,000)	Ministry of Employment (but implemented by regional governments)
	Women's Entrepreneurship Support Programme (Programa de Apoyo Empresarial a las Mujeres, PAEM)	Microcredit (up to €25,000)	Institute of Women (Instituto de la Mujer y para la Igualdad de Oportunidades), an independent body attached to the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality, with the support of the Chamber of Commerce and co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF)
	Support to obtain bank guarantees (Ayuda para la obtención de avales) in cooperation with the private sector	Credit guarantee	Institute of Women (as above)
Sweden	Norrlandsfonden	Loan and grants	Norrlandsfonden
	Almi Invest AB		Almi Företagspartner AB
	Vinnova		Vinnova
UK	Women in Innovation Awards	Grant of £50,000, in total £1.2 million (€1.35 million as at 7 October 2019) The award offers de minimis aid to eight innovative UK businesswomen per year who will contribute to solving one of the government's 'Industrial Strategy Grand Challenges': artificial intelligence and data, the ageing society, clean growth, or the future of mobility. It also provides bespoke mentoring, coaching and business support.	UK government
	The Aspire Fund	£12.5 million (€14 million) in investments; minimum investment of £100,000 (€112,000) and maximum investment of £1 million (€1,122,000); the fund matches up to 50% investment for women-led businesses in the UK so as to help attract investors into SMEs by cutting their risk.	British Business Bank (a state-owned economic development bank initiated by the Department for Business, Environment and Industrial Strategy)

can also be recipients of such grants. In certain cases, they can be combined with mentorship, coaching and business support programmes (the UK) as well as membership in networks (Ireland).

Credit and credit guarantee schemes: State institutions (and sometimes relevant institutions of local authorities), in partnership with banks, provide microcredit and interest rate subsidies (Croatia, Hungary, Poland) or zero interest rates (Italy) to female entrepreneurs and women with a

business idea or start-up, etc. Loan conditions can stipulate the type of enterprise targeted more specifically, such as microenterprises with fewer than 10 employees and an annual turnover of less than €2 million (for example, Ireland). Often in conjunction with loan provision, credit guarantee schemes secure up to a certain amount of the loan (Bulgaria, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy and Spain). It is not unusual for credit guarantee schemes to be issued in conjunction with a business advice service to support entrepreneurs with practical business issues at hand.

Tax credits: Tax credits are public support measures provided to female entrepreneurs as an incentive to innovate, expand and develop their business. Tax credits are widely available policy measures, but only one country (Malta) was found to have a gender focus on this scheme.

Investment funding and business angel investment:

This form of state investment in certain types of enterprises is applied in only a minority of countries (four). The investment can take the form of equity (Ireland), angel investment (Slovakia), or other forms of investment (France and the UK). In Ireland, the Competitive Start Fund targets early start-up female entrepreneurs and provides up to €50,000 in equity investment in specific sectors (manufacturing and internationally traded services sectors: internet, games, apps, mobile, software as a service, cloud computing, enterprise software, life sciences, food, clean technology and industrial products). While not investing specifically in women-led enterprises, the French public bank for investment, Bpifrance, is known to be among those funds that have invested the most in female entrepreneurs.⁶ Angel investments are supported by the Slovak Business Agency in female start-ups with innovative business ideas or in innovative sectors. The British Aspire Fund matches up to 50% of investments into women-led enterprises with the objective of attracting investors into women-led SMEs by cutting their financing risk.

The largest share of countries (9 out of 16) provides grants/award schemes as well as credit, while 6 countries offer credit guarantees. The largest number of such financial support initiatives are implemented by Italy (five), followed by Bulgaria and Ireland (each with four), France, Lithuania, Spain and Sweden (each with three), Germany and the UK (each with two), and the remaining seven countries (Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Malta, Poland and Slovakia) with one scheme each. Figure 2 shows the distribution of the public finance schemes. Figure 3 shows the public finance schemes by type, with most schemes covering grants and credit (13 each) and credit guarantees (9). It is notable that four investment funds and business angel funding schemes are in place in four Member States.

Sectors

Most of the financial support schemes are open to all sectors of the economy. When there is a sector focus, policy schemes tend to prioritise the following: technology sector (games, apps, mobile, cloud computing, etc.); life sciences and environment sector, clean technology; manufacturing; business services; retail, commerce and services as well as personal services; tourism and hospitality; and agro-industry. Nearly all the financial support initiatives promote innovative ideas and proposals. Countries with a sector focus include Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland and Italy.

In some cases, public policies associate the provision of grants and awards with the industrial or innovation strategy priorities (UK) or the innovation and competitiveness programmes (Bulgaria). This can give direction to the market and female entrepreneurs to focus

on big societal challenges such as artificial intelligence, clean growth and the ageing society. This can have a double effect, supporting female entrepreneurship and directing resources to the desired industrial policy priorities. Local authorities (for instance the Sofia municipality in Bulgaria) were also found to link innovation and smart specialisation with such grants, as part of their public-private accelerators.

Target population

The aim of the policy schemes is to assist female-owned enterprises, start-ups and potential female entrepreneurs. Among the potential entrepreneurs, specific groups, such as unemployed or economically inactive women or women with a disability, are targeted as a measure to increase their participation in the labour market. While most of the schemes specifically target women, some of them are also designed to include the male population (for instance young, unemployed individuals).

Financing support metrics

It appears that there is a lack of gender-disaggregated data and metrics to allow meaningful comparisons either at the national or cross-border levels. When closely examining the financial support provided to women through these policy schemes, only 8 countries out of 16 were able to provide gender-specific data. Based on the available data, female entrepreneurship support schemes are in excess of €308 million (Table 2). Data on the number of women-led enterprises which have received support are patchy and not systematically collected and analysed, as shown in Table 2.

A rough estimate of the total amounts earmarked for financial support schemes for entrepreneurship (open to female entrepreneurs and other groups) in the 16 Member States raises the total financial support to over €970 million. This means that women can potentially access part of these financial resources with a view to set up or grow their enterprise.

Economic and employment impacts

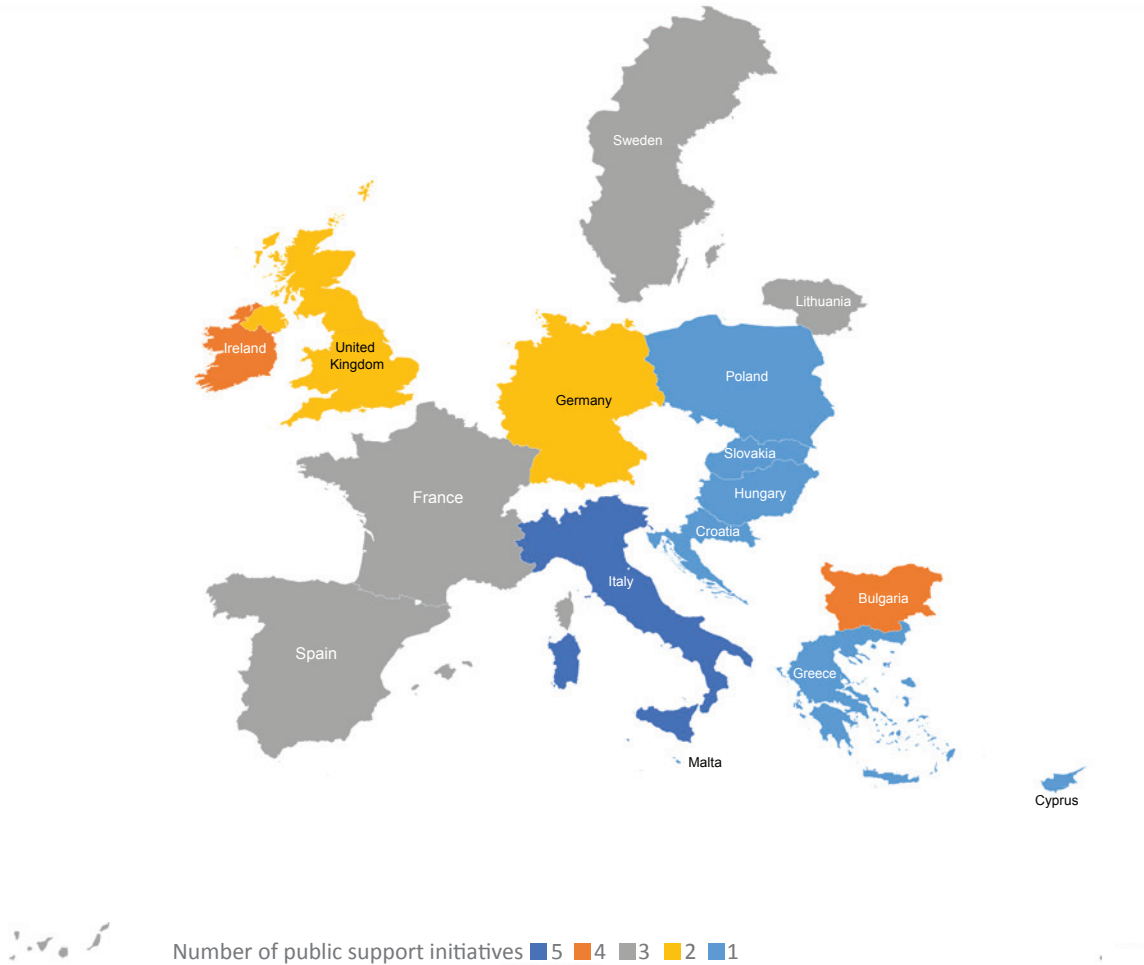
Where available, reports from national correspondents provide figures in terms of economic and employment impacts. National reports and figures on economic impacts are not available, which makes the assessment of policy measures impossible.

The Swedish authorities have estimated that the total amount of loans issued in 2017 would generate investments of approximately €230,000,000 in the region (northern Sweden).

Employment impacts (the number of jobs created) have also been investigated; however, data were not gender disaggregated and were only publicly available in four countries and for a selected number of programmes (Cyprus, Ireland, Italy and Lithuania). Official data for policy initiatives in these four countries suggest that they have a positive employment effect on at least 10,700 jobs (accomplished or expected by the end of the programming period). The largest employment effects are estimated in Ireland (4,969 jobs) and Italy (4,953 jobs).

⁶ The share of funds raised by Bpifrance on female entrepreneurs is higher than the average, according to the KPMG barometers for 2018 and 2019.

Figure 2: Number of public measures financing female entrepreneurship in EU countries



Other countries do not provide gender disaggregated data for their policy initiatives. For instance, although they target women among their groups, the grant scheme in Germany and the Hungarian credit guarantee scheme do not provide gender-specific data. The two initiatives provide cumulative employment figures, showing more than 4,000 jobs (secured) in Germany and 440 jobs (created) in Hungary as a result of the two policy initiatives. The overall picture calls for more systematic efforts for providing gender disaggregated data and evaluation studies that assess impacts of policies.

Other state measures supporting female entrepreneurship

Female entrepreneurship is supported by the state and other local and regional authorities, not only through direct financing but also through training in entrepreneurship, mentoring, networking, childcare support, etc.

Challenging stereotypes and perceptions

A range of national studies and some public websites (for example, Luxembourg and Ireland: Acket et al, 2011; Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation,

Figure 3: Types of state-funded schemes supporting female entrepreneurship

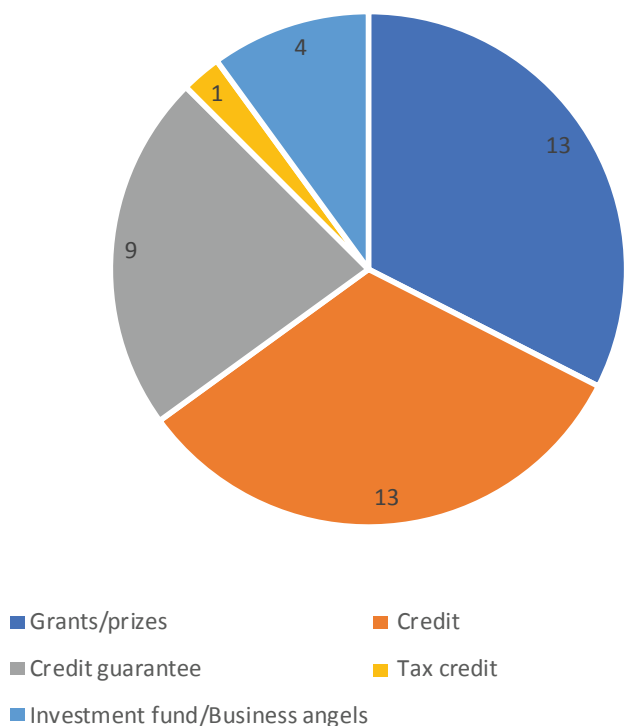


Table 2: Public support programmes financing female entrepreneurship

Country	Name of support scheme	Financial support	Number of women-led enterprises supported
Croatia	Loan programme for the financing of female entrepreneurship (Programi kreditiranja poduzetništva žena)	€33.6 million	540 (anticipated – programme starts in 2019)
Germany	Micromezzanine fund (Mikromezzaninfonds Deutschland) (grant)	€75 million	N/A
Hungary	BEA microcredit programme	€5,000 (in interest rate subsidies)	10 (estimated)
Ireland	Fuelling Ambition Roadshow	€2,000 for each Roadshow winner	N/A
	Women of Ireland Fund (Mná na hÉireann)	Cash grants between €50,000 and €100,000 per year over three years (scheme started in 2019)	N/A
	Competitive Start Fund	€1 million	N/A
Lithuania	The global grant instrument ‘Business Start-up Subsidies’ (Visuotinės dotacijos priemonė ‘Subsidijos verslo pradžiai’)	€0.96 million for women-led enterprises	99 women-led enterprises
	Entrepreneurship promotion 2014–2020 programme (Programa ‘Verslumo skatinimas 2014–2020’)	€4.6 million for women-led enterprises	178 women-led enterprises
	Rural development programme 2014–2020 (Lietuvos kaimo plėtros 2014–2020 metų programa)	€1.6 million (for both women and men)	89 (both)
Poland	Loan fund for women (Fundusz pożyczkowy dla kobiet)	€116,260 on loans (2015 data)	15
Sweden	Norrlandsfonden	Loan €8,174,496 (2017)	1,854
	Almi Invest AB	Loan €76,058,485 (2017)	
	Vinnova	Grants €93,412,424	
UK	Women in Innovation Awards	£1.2 million (€1.35 million as at 7 October 2019)	40
	The Aspire Fund	£12.5 million (€14 million)	

Note: N/A = data not available

undated) refer to the characteristics of women as being risk-averse, having a fear of failure, showing lower levels of confidence and technical expertise, etc., which are considered challenges female entrepreneurs are faced with. Stereotypes are undoubtedly among the obstacles mentioned in many countries. The Romanian and Swedish studies (Dodescu et al, 2011; Malmström et al, 2017) clearly refer to measures tackling such stereotypes rooted in people’s minds which may affect women’s ability to access funding. Creating female entrepreneurial role models through media and communication campaigns in schools and in wider society would surely play a big role in changing people’s mindsets. Similarly, cultural stereotypes and lack of family support are considered barriers to female entrepreneurship (working group of the Ministry of Economy) in Bulgaria. National studies and associations in Croatia (European Parliament, 2017; CEPOR, 2017), Estonia (ENUT, 2013), Luxembourg (Acket et al, 2011), Poland (Entrepreneurial Women Network) and Sweden (Malmström et al, 2017) clearly refer to the detrimental role of stereotypes.

Addressing childcare and family commitments

Specifically, addressing issues such as childcare and maternity entitlements for female entrepreneurs are flagged up as factors that can facilitate female entrepreneurship. These issues are mentioned in a Romanian study and in the Irish Joint Committee

recommendations (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2015; Ceptureanu, 2016). The latter recommended a childcare incentive as part of the overall financial package provided to female entrepreneurs targeting external markets (exports). Both reports raise the issue of geographical barriers and question the ability of women located outside capital cities to access information, training, mentoring and funding. More efforts should be made to make such public support available to all regions.

Capacity-building entrepreneurial support programmes

National studies strongly recommend training courses, support for networking, events, mentoring, creating and maintaining incubators and accelerators for female entrepreneurs. Below are examples of the findings by country.

Cyprus: A Cypriot study (Nearchou-Ellinas and Kountouris, 2004) suggests a need for the upgrading of women’s entrepreneurial skills and providing access to mentoring and information which is crucial for accessing funding sources.

Ireland: In a list of 12 recommendations (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2015), the Irish Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation specifically refers to creating a national female mentoring network, extending the business network to cities outside the capital and promoting proficiency in technology.

Lithuania: The Amway Global Entrepreneurship report (Amway Europe, 2018) shows that women in Lithuania indicate that they would need support in dealing with finances, taxes and regulations and how to raise money for their company.

Luxembourg: A study conducted for the Luxembourg Ministry of Equality suggested a need for improving entrepreneurial skills (Acket et al, 2011).

Norway: Large and persistent gender differentials should be addressed, and more comprehensive mentor programmes should be established in Norway (Grünfeld et al, 2019).

Slovakia: Increasing the availability of financial literacy training courses would immensely benefit Slovakian female entrepreneurs, an OECD (2017b) report suggests.

United Kingdom: A UK Survey of SME finance (2007) found that female business leaders did not know how to access capital and recommended that information and support should be provided by SME associations and public organisations.

Type A and Type B programmes

For the purposes of this study, the programmes are differentiated by classifying them as type A and type B programmes (Table 3). Type A programmes are usually large programmes, initiated, run and funded by state authorities. Type B programmes include those that are supported by the state (central, regional or local authorities) but not necessarily initiated by the state authorities. The latter can also include partnerships with women's networks, associations and other actors.

Most of the programmes (Table 3) are type B initiatives (state-supported), while four countries (France, Greece, Spain and UK) are running both type A and type B programmes. Type A-only programmes are only present in central and eastern European countries (Croatia, Czechia, Romania and Slovenia). These include a strategy for female entrepreneurship (Croatia), support for female entrepreneurship through training, mentoring, networking (Romania and Slovenia) and activities as part of the operational programme for employment (Czechia).

Table 3: Public capacity-building support measures across selected countries

Type A state-funded programmes	
Croatia	Strategy for the development of female entrepreneurship in the republic of Croatia (2014–2020).
Czechia	Operational programme for employment with entrepreneurship activities.
France	Plan interministériel en faveur de l'égalité professionnelle 2016–2020 and 25 regional action plans (Plan d'action régional – PAR) for female entrepreneurs have been launched since 2010 (including regional authorities such as the Conseil régional, the state, the public group Caisse des Dépôts and some private banks).
Greece	The public programme for the creation of a new financial instrument for strengthening the activity of Greek Businesses in the Balkans and Southern Europe, run by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is a plan with very broad scope covering different activities including networking and mentoring activities for female entrepreneurs.
Romania	The 'Woman Entrepreneur' programme launched by the Romanian Ministry for Business Environment, Commerce and Entrepreneurship.
Slovenia	Entrepreneurial training programme for unemployed women with tertiary education who want to start an independent entrepreneurial activity run by the Public Agency for Entrepreneurship, Internationalisation, Foreign Investment and Technology with financial support from the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology (MGRT), and in collaboration with the Employment Office and the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.
Spain	'Aids and subsidies for unemployed people who want to become self-employed' targets three groups which includes women; Shock Plan for Youth Employment 2019–2021 Aids for unemployed women to create their own company (run by the public employment service); Rural women development run by local governments and public employment services.
UK	Meet a mentor programme (Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy); Tax-Free Childcare; Scottish Framework and Action Plan for Women in Enterprise (run by the Economic Development Directorate).
Type B state-supported programmes (including those supported by regional and local authorities)	
Austria	Projects funded by the Federal Economic Chamber, the province of Salzburg and Vienna Business Agency. The province of Salzburg and Vienna Business Agency received support from the European Regional Development Fund.
Belgium	Several projects are supported by the Brussels region ('Wonderful women', and '100,000 entrepreneurs' with co-founding by the Walloon government); Flemish government (Markant VZW–Artemis project; Artemis Women's Entrepreneurship, Artemis #SheDIDIT); Walloon government (Diane project). These are all implemented through associations (for instance, women's associations, SME organisations and public-private cooperation projects such as Google Digital Workshops).
Germany	Berufswegplanung (planning occupational paths) financed by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs; Qualification in setting up a business for immigrant women financed by the German department of the Senate; Female Founders Cup in Baden-Württemberg financed by the Federal State of Baden-Württemberg.

Table 3: (Continued)

Finland	Oona – Osaamista ja onnistumisen tukea yrittäjänaisille ('Knowledge and success support for female entrepreneurs') run by the Metropolia University of Applied Sciences and Finnish Institute of Occupational Health and European Social Fund (ESF) support; LIEKKI ('Growth path for female entrepreneurs') run by the Women Entrepreneurs of Finland (ESF-project); VENLA – Koulutusta verkossa ja langattomasti ('Training online') ESF-funded project by Häme University of Applied Sciences and Lahti University of Applied Science. There are several publicly funded programmes and schemes supporting female entrepreneurship in Finland. Many of them are launched at a regional level, often partly funded by the ESF.
France	Several projects initiated by regional organisations, associations and networks: Regional organisations plan on equality; Les Premières; Actionelles; Force Femmes; Willa, etc.
Greece	European network to promote women's entrepreneurship (WES); Gender equality promotion actions: Entrepreneurship workshop (Crete Regional Authority and University of Crete); New financial instrument for Greek businesses in the Balkans and southeast Europe; NSFR (Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, Municipality of Drama); Circle of Women Aged 50+ (Municipality of Galatsi).
Hungary	StartupHer – Hiventures (MFB Group), an incubator programme sponsored by the Hungarian Development Bank, National Research, Development and Innovation Office (NKFIH) and EU funds; Women Business Angels receives 'a small amount' of subsidy from the Hungarian Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Human Capacities (EMMI), the National Cooperation Fund (NEA) – a government body within EMMI and EEA and Norway Grants.
Ireland	Local Enterprise Office, Women in Business Networks organised by county; Female Entrepreneurship Support, Women's Rural Entrepreneurial Network (WREN), formerly called Cumas, Cork and Limerick; Rubicon Exxcel programme, funded by Enterprise Ireland; Female High Fliers, supported by Enterprise Ireland; Going for Growth, supported by Enterprise Ireland and private actors; Illuminate, sponsored by M1 Drogheda Chamber Skillnet, Meath and Lough Local Enterprise Offices, a bank and private actors; ACORNS, funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, through the Rural Innovation and Development Fund; 'Empower Start' co-funded by the Irish Government and the ESF as part of the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014–2020; Empower Growth ('Empower' co-funded by the Irish Government and the ESF as part of the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014–2020).
Lithuania	Lithuanian Business Women's Network launched by Vilnius Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts (funded by state institutions (regional municipalities) and others); Women Entrepreneurship Academy launched by Vilnius University, the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Different Me, LLC training experts, the US Embassy in Lithuania (2015–2016) and state support.
Luxembourg	Business Mentoring Programme run by the Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry for Equality and other organisations.
Poland	Cross-EU women Business Angels in cooperation with other Member States, the Polish Agency Development (state agency) and women's networks.
Slovakia	Businesswoman of Slovakia Competition, organised by the Slovak Business Agency.
Spain	Innovatia 8.3 project a collaboration between the University of Santiago and the institute for women and equal opportunities.
Sweden	'FemTech Bootcamp' Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth and Wellstreet (at a regional level).
UK	The Women Adding Value to the Economy (WAVE) project (funded by the ESF through the Welsh Government – Wales only).

The country mapping of activities shows that, in total, 19 Member States offer 57 programmes supporting female entrepreneurship (Figure 4). The programmes differ in nature and scope.

Nearly half of the total number of support programmes (46%) are provided by four countries: Ireland (nine programmes), Belgium and France (six each), and Spain (five).

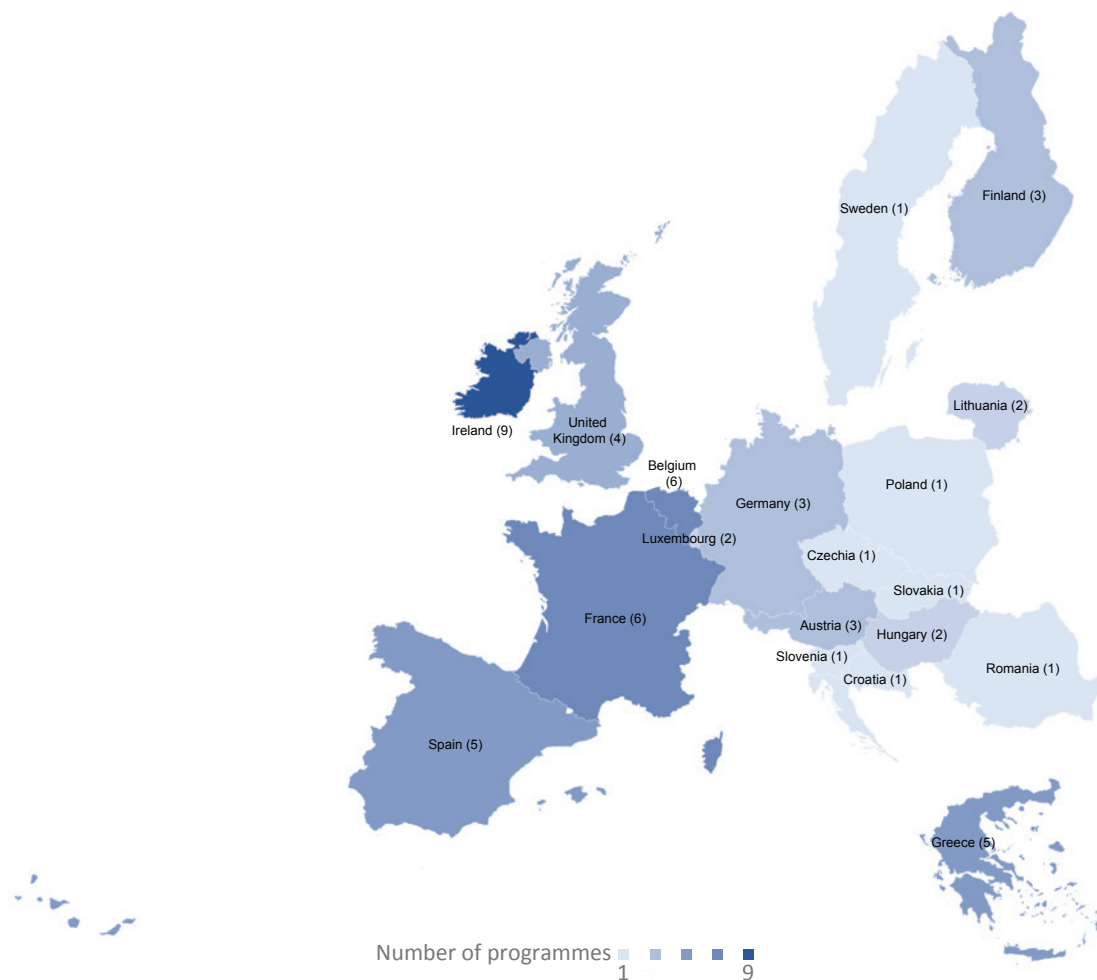
Activities supported

A closer look into the type of activities initiated through the policy programmes demonstrates that overall, there is an equal spread of activities across training, mentoring and networking, with a slight prioritisation of training (Figure 5). However, entrepreneurship support programmes do not make a connection with childcare activities. Many policy initiatives introduced in the last

few years promote childcare support for working parents, however, when it comes to female entrepreneurship programmes, childcare takes second or even third priority.

Among the 19 Member States with female entrepreneurship programmes, only three countries (Croatia, France and the UK) dedicate resources and activities to childcare support. The Croatian Strategy of Women Entrepreneurship Development in the Republic of Croatia for the period 2014–2020, covers all activities, including childcare, with just one (quite sizeable) programme. The French large cross-ministry plan in support of professional equality (Plan interministériel en faveur de l'égalité professionnelle 2016–2020, an extension of the 'Entreprendre au féminin' programme) covers an impressively large number of activities, including childcare. The Tax-Free Childcare scheme, introduced in 2014 by the UK government, was made available

Figure 4: Countries with state-funded female entrepreneurship programmes (including those funded by local authorities)



to all working parents, regardless of whether they are self-employed. The Tax-Free Childcare scheme has the potential to support women to explore opportunities they may have previously considered beyond their reach due to pre-existing family commitments, such as starting a business.

Other forms of support include reduced social contributions for the self-employed, the possibility to capitalise unemployment benefits, access to microfunding (Spanish programme). Opportunities to match investors and female entrepreneurs can be offered through pitching events (Polish programmes).

Benefits to women from the programmes

With the number of programmes and activities presented above, it is important to identify the female population accessing and benefiting from these activities (Figure 6). Available data generated in 11 out of 19 Member States, suggest that there are at least 377,000 women who participated in training activities related to entrepreneurship and nearly equal numbers participating

in mentoring and networking activities (207,489 and 182,944 respectively).⁷ It should be noted that many of the programmes are still running and assessment reports do not necessarily exist, but it is also the case that some countries have not made their data publicly available yet. For this reason, the numbers released in the country reports may be underrepresented. Most of the countries have an equal spread of women across two activities (for instance, women availing of training activities also have access to mentoring or networks).

Sectors targeted

Female entrepreneurs (or potential entrepreneurs) active in any economic sector can avail of the state support programmes in each of the 19 Member States. However, six countries dedicate one or more of their programmes to a specific sector, which in most cases is the digital and technology sector, and in the case of Finland, the sectors covering health and social care (welfare sector), travel and creative industries.

⁷ The numbers do not add up as the same women can participate in training, mentoring and networking activities.

Figure 5: Activities covered by the public initiatives (EU Member States)

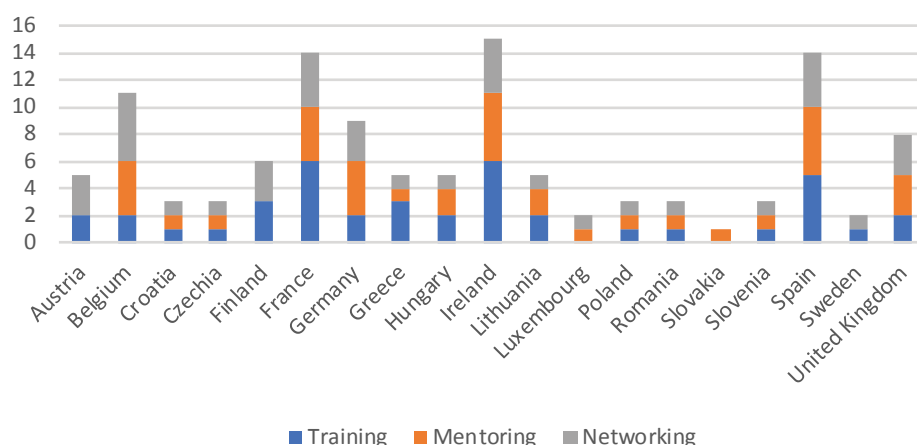
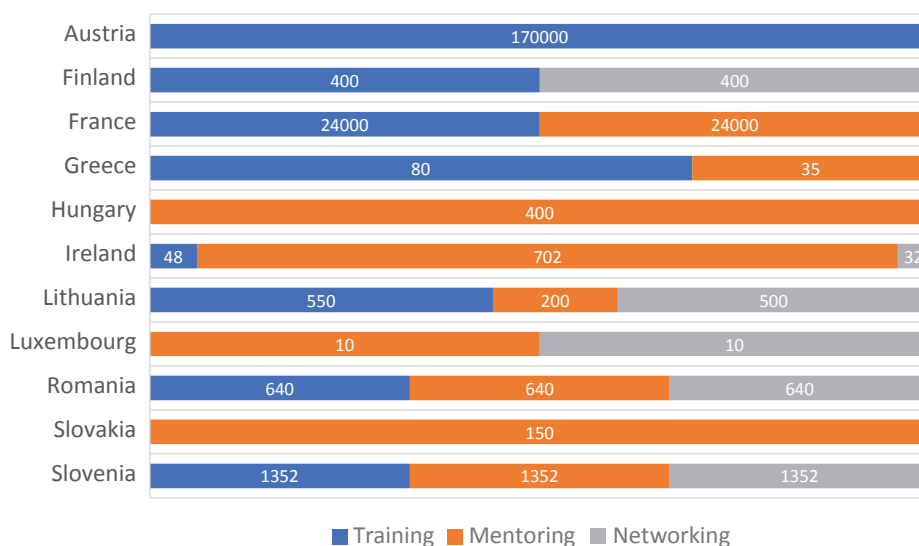


Figure 6: Distribution of women benefiting from the programmes, per activity and per country (in EU countries with data)



Assessing the impact

Very few countries have assessment reports on the impact of their programmes, and this is an issue with some public policies. It should be noted, however, that many of the programmes are still running; therefore, their impact would need to be assessed only at their end. Publicly available reports and testimonials in seven countries (Belgium, Croatia, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania and Spain) suggest a positive impact.

A recent evaluation of the Irish programme 'Growing for Growth' notes that, for 2018, the 66 participants who successfully completed the cycle have registered a turnover of €66.8 million. They hired an additional 90 full-time and 20 part-time staff and there were four first-time exporters among the participants.

Similarly, the Spanish national report indicates that in 2018 there were 10,668 users of the PAEM (Women's Entrepreneurship Support Programme) in Spain, which led to the creation of 2,217 companies.

A report released in 2014 (Keser, 2014) on the implementation of the Strategy of Women Entrepreneurship Development in the Republic of Croatia shows that systematic support for female entrepreneurship development has a positive and significant impact on women's entrepreneurship capacity, such as employment impacts, self-reliance, and so on. The report suggests a need to coordinate state activities (various authorities) with a view to remove gender imbalance in different aspects of public life.

Among the other programmes, the positive impacts created as a result of policy support include the following:

- greater self-confidence and self-reliance, encouragement and networking (Belgium, Croatia, Finland and Lithuania)
- increased knowledge supporting company growth and encouragement through networking opportunities as reported by participants (Finland)
- new approach to investment and opportunities for accessing funds (Hungary)
- better management skills, greater awareness of development opportunities and improved access to relevant business information (Lithuania)

Other initiatives

While public financing and capacity-building activities may not be widely available in all countries, some public-private cooperation projects as well as activities of other organisations, such as NGOs, women's associations, industry associations and social impact organisations may be offered to complement or cover the gap. The activities

include networking, workshops, skills development, woman-to-woman mentoring, providing fora for crowdfunding, offering advice on how to access funding, and so on. Some selected examples of such activities are presented in the box below.

Summary

This chapter investigated public policies in support of female entrepreneurship. The overall picture shows that the public sector continues to support female entrepreneurs and address market failure. Public finance initiatives in support of female entrepreneurship are in place in 16 countries. Such support is provided through typical public measures such as grants, credit and credit guarantee schemes, tax credits but also investment funding and business angel funding. The latter are often provided in cooperation with banks, investment funds and other investors following strict criteria.

Available data in seven Member States show that public support measures have supported female entrepreneurship with public money in excess of €308 million. All economic sectors are fundable, but

Examples of other initiatives in support of female entrepreneurship

- **Denmark:** Initiatives of various organisations (such as networks, associations, private organisations) come in the form of events with a focus on entrepreneurship and networking, for example, Girls Are Awesome and #IamRemarkable. These types of events are intended to assist and inspire women to launch their business and network with each other.
- **Estonia:** The Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW) organises networking activities, events and training programmes (for example, how to start and run your own business). They also organise various projects, such as a joint initiative with Coca Cola Estonia and the Estonian Business School, whose purpose is to increase the number of female entrepreneurs and their capacity to run successful businesses.
- **Finland:** Some networks promote the position of women in the labour market by providing opportunities for skills development, networking, mentoring, supporting work-life balance, and thus, indirectly, entrepreneurship. For example: Mothers in Business (a network that supports educated and career-oriented mothers in balancing work and family); the Women Leaders Program, run by the Finland Chamber of Commerce, which promotes women's access to top positions; Aalto Women in Business, which offers a forum for discussion and peer support for like-minded women and organises events with opportunities for networking.
- **Lithuania:** Women's NGOs provide a wide range of training, events and counselling funded by the EU, for example: the Women's Information Centre (Moterų Informacijos Centras); the Lithuanian Innovation Centre (EMPOWA) whose mission is to boost the participation of female entrepreneurs in the Horizon 2020 SME Instrument programme; and the Lithuanian Women's Lobby (Lietuvos Moterų Lobistinė Organizacija), which is made up of NGOs working on promoting gender equality and women's entrepreneurship.
- **Slovakia:** The Businesswoman of Slovakia contest (Podnikateľ'ka Slovenska) started in 1999 and is organised by the Slovak Business Agency. It aims at 'rewarding successful women in business and their ability to establish their companies firmly in the market'. The competition is designed for start-ups (women who have been running their business for a minimum of 12 months and a maximum of 3 years), for well-established companies (those that have been in operation for more than 3 years), as well as for self-employed women. To take part, female entrepreneurs have to be the sole owner of a company or have a share in the company representing at least 50%.

there is a focus on innovative ideas and businesses. Many policy support schemes tend to prioritise certain sectors, such as ICT, digital products, cloud computers, mobile applications, life sciences, clean technology and the environmental sector. However, women active in manufacturing, service industries, tourism and agro-industry are also eligible for state funding.

Public support in the form of training programmes, networking events and mentoring are present in 19 Member States, and many women have benefited

from them. On the other hand, childcare support and its link to female entrepreneurship was only identified in 3 out of 19 Member States. Data collected from eight countries suggest that there are at least 377,000 women who have participated in training activities. Accelerators and incubators are particularly useful, as they provide a nurturing space for developing business ideas and networking with potential investors. Policy support should be provided as bundled services rather than ad hoc initiatives.

3 Pathways to accessing funding

The mapping exercise described in this report shows that there have been some interesting developments in the last few years in the EU Member States and Norway regarding the financing of female entrepreneurs. New funds have been created, with gender becoming part of their industry investment criteria. Some of the female entrepreneurs interviewed for the purposes of this study have already benefited from these funds (see section below). Innovative financing approaches have been taken by some of the state organisations who also provide other types of support.

This chapter attempts to group countries according to their financial support and other types of support to female entrepreneurs, describes their financial journey and provides the views of female entrepreneurs themselves.

Grouping of countries in terms of support for female entrepreneurship

Examining the types of financial support and private investment funds with gender criteria in the EU28 and Norway, countries have been distributed in four categories. Three countries (Spain, Poland and the UK) were found to provide all types of financial support, private investment through dedicated funds, public financing and other support measures.

Group 1: The ‘investment funds with gender criteria’ group consists of countries that have in place private funds that include gender criteria in their investment decisions. Seven countries (Belgium, Czechia, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the UK) have seen 11 such funds established, which can potentially tilt the investment field in support of gender diversity. This constitutes a remarkable change in the investment landscape for female entrepreneurs.

It is notable that, in five out of seven countries in this group, the number of self-employed women is above the EU average (10%). This may partially explain the interest in setting up investment funds with gender criteria.

Group 2: The ‘public finance’ group includes 16 countries with dedicated female entrepreneurship finance schemes. It is indicative that only three countries in this group (Spain, Poland and the UK) have private funds in place, which shows the need for the state to provide public support and address market failure. As it is much harder to acquire funding in the starting phase of the company, providing public financial support to companies ready for investment increases their chances of accessing capital.

Grants, credit, credit guarantee schemes and investment funding have all been found to benefit female entrepreneurs, particularly at the beginning of their financial journey. This is supported by evidence in the literature, but also by the views expressed by female entrepreneurs (see interviews with funds in Chapter 1 and with female entrepreneurs in the next section).

Group 3: The ‘capacity-building public schemes’ group includes a larger number of countries (19). The support schemes are implemented either through large state-run programmes or through financial support to organisations running programmes that promote female entrepreneurship. Training, mentoring, networking and childcare support can increase business performance and enable female entrepreneurs to set up and grow their businesses.

Group 4: The ‘quiet’ group of countries has no active state support measures for female entrepreneurs (apart from information and dissemination campaigns and awareness raising measures) and no dedicated private funds. The group consists of two Nordic countries, two Baltic countries and one southern European country (Denmark, Norway, Estonia, Latvia and Portugal).⁸

Interestingly, national studies in some of the countries in the group suggest a gender imbalance regarding entrepreneurship (for example, Denmark, Estonia and Norway) and difficulties in accessing venture capital faced by female entrepreneurs.

All the countries in this group, except for Portugal, have a low share of self-employed women. Denmark and Norway are considered to have highly egalitarian societies with a high proportion of female participation in the labour market and a well-developed welfare state linked to employment status. However, female entrepreneurship is not well developed. Self-employed people (including women) in Norway must insure themselves for sickness, loss of income, etc., which can make entrepreneurship riskier for women than men (Grünfeld et al, 2019).

Overall, the reasons often quoted for non-gender-specific entrepreneurship measures are:

- entrepreneurship policies are considered gender-neutral
- financing barriers to entrepreneurship are the same for women and men
- information campaigns can be adequate tools for attracting potential female entrepreneurs

Overall, public institutions in these countries view entrepreneurship policies as gender-neutral.

⁸ Portuguese authorities plan to introduce a number of new policy support initiatives as part of the Operational Support Programme, but these were not initiated at the time of writing.

Figure 7 shows the grouping of countries into four categories. On the lower end of the spectrum are the ‘quiet’ countries with no public initiatives or dedicated investment funds. On the top end (on the right) is the group with the newly created private funds investing in women-owned or co-founded enterprises. Next to that is the group of countries providing public support (financing) and the group with capacity-building public support programmes. It should be noted that some countries are in more than one group as the figure shows.

Associations, NGOs, social impact organisations and other private organisations complement the picture by organising information and networking events, training sessions, competitions, etc.

Regarding sectoral approach to investment, both groups (private and public) are, in principle, open to all sectors. They both have a technological focus; however, the group with the public financial support tends to be broader in scope and covers different service industries, tourism, agro-industry as well as manufacturing. This suggests a more balanced approach, covering a wider range of economic sectors. Table 4 presents the sectoral focus of the private investment funds and public financial support groups.

Views and opinions of associations and public institutions

National correspondents were asked to report on the views of women and women’s business associations, as well as the public institutions regarding financing for female entrepreneurship. The views reflect the national situation and include the following suggestions:

- increase financing opportunities for female entrepreneurs
- create or maintain public support schemes
- increase the number of capacity-building public support schemes
- eradicate stereotypes and create role models in female entrepreneurship
- promote gender diversity measures

Table 4: Sectoral focus of the investment funds and public financial support groups

Investment funds group	Public financial support group
ICT	ICT (Internet, games, apps, mobile phones, cloud computers)
Health technology	Life sciences
Renewable energy	Environmental sector, clean technology
Education technology	Business services, retail, commerce, personal services
Digital publishing	Manufacturing
Fintech	Tourism, hospitality
Fashion and design	Agro-industry

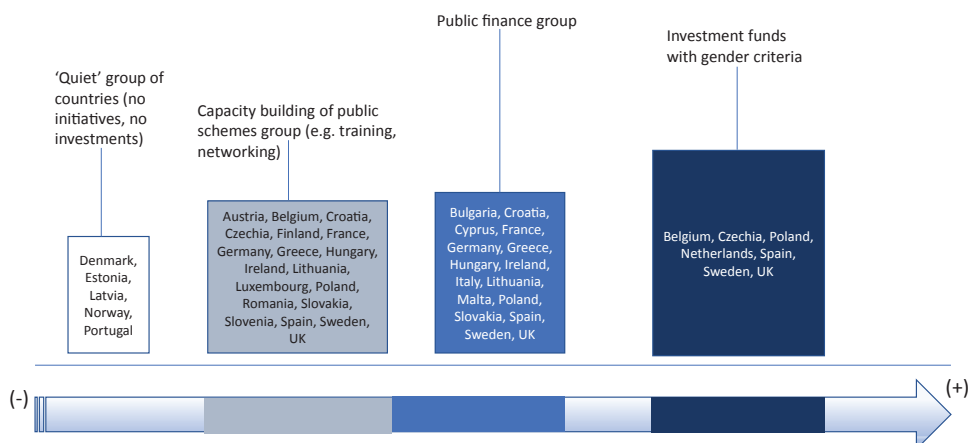
Increase financing opportunities for female entrepreneurs

Overall, many national organisations are in favour of increasing opportunities for women to access capital. The opinion that female entrepreneurs are still struggling to access bank loans and other forms of financing has been held by women’s associations and some public institutions in many countries (Estonia, Finland, France, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and the UK).

Some associations in countries which have seen increases in female entrepreneurship in the last years, such as Poland and Spain, are concerned that the trend may not be sustained in the future due to financial problems. Maltese associations (for example, the Foundation for Women Entrepreneurs and the Malta Association of Women in Business) have also advocated for the increase of private sector financing. The organisations maintain that female founders would not be willing to mortgage the family house as a collateral for a large loan; therefore, they suggest the creation of a guarantee fund to help women.

The national correspondents in France, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the UK reported a lack of adequate investments by existing generic private funds/finance institutions. As many of these funds are predominantly owned and managed

Figure 7: Grouping of EU countries and Norway based on financing support



Source: Author’s elaboration

by men, they do not use a gender lens in their investments. UK and Polish associations suggested that funds should become more gender diverse themselves, so that they have a more gender-balanced team of fund managers and invest in female-run businesses.

Associations suggested that research and industry progress reports should be published on a regular basis. An increased number of female business angels could also contribute towards addressing the challenge. The British Business Bank suggested directing the €2.8 billion (£2.5 billion) British Patient Capital Programme so that it becomes a 'Catalyst and Champion' for UK venture capital by leading on diversity and inclusion.

Increase public financial support for female entrepreneurs

Many associations argue in favour of active public financial support. Continuous public support is needed due to the uneven playing field as reported by associations in Estonia, Finland, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain.

A tendency of the private funds to invest in large companies and not in female companies, and a tendency of the public sector to favour investments in the ICT sector is seen as an issue by the Spanish association. The Spanish association also argues that banks tend to prioritise investments with high economic returns rather than considering social criteria.

Many women in Finland operate locally and do not always apply for large funds (venture capital, equity, etc.) and therefore public financial support would be more suitable. In Finland, some consolidation of the financing schemes offered by the public authorities would allow a better appreciation of the services offered. Based on communication with associations (such as the Slovenian Community of female entrepreneurs, or Femmes Sans Frontières), state bodies and the chamber of Commerce of Slovenia, discontinuation of the only female entrepreneurship support programme in Slovenia means that there will be a need to find funding opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

Increasing the availability of start-up financing is recommended in the OECD report for Slovakia (2017b), while increasing the number of accelerators has been recommended in the Netherlands. In the case of Romania, it has been suggested that more significant monetary contributions should be made available through public support. In Estonia, it has been argued that assigning extra points to women applying for public programmes (as is currently being done in other countries such as Bulgaria) would be helpful. Additionally, providing gender disaggregated statistics would assist stakeholders to better appreciate the situation rather than relying on opinions.

According to the Malta Association of Women in Business (MAWB), tax credits are not very beneficial for small start-ups, because these companies have low cash flow so their return on investment is very low. A guarantee fund could potentially reduce the risk in credit. The Austrian employer organisation, on the other hand, is in favour of tax benefits.

Associations like the Estonian Association of SMEs (EVEA) emphasise that the gender-neutral approach to entrepreneurship and financial support fails to consider that women and men have different starting points when planning to start a company and are, therefore, unequal. Additionally, the Estonian Women's Studies and Resource Centre (ENUT) argues that it is important for the state to turn its attention to support for female entrepreneurship. EVEA argues that the 'Estonian Entrepreneurship Growth Strategy 2020' prioritises technology and ICT traditionally led by men. Also, women are mostly solo entrepreneurs leading microenterprises with little intention to grow them, while most state support measures are aimed at growth and competitiveness. The gender pay gap is very high in Estonia, which suggests that women have lower wages and thus less capital or finances to start a business (ENUT, 2013).

Expand capacity-building public support schemes

Capacity-building schemes such as training, mentoring and networking are appreciated and welcomed by many countries, but they are particularly emphasised in Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, the Netherlands and Slovakia. Connecting with other female entrepreneurs and inspiring others are important initiatives, particularly when they target women in the same economic sector.

Improving presentation skills for pitching events (the Netherlands), guidance, training of women in rural areas and childcare (Austria and Cyprus) and financial literacy training (Hungary and Slovakia) are among the public capacity-building initiatives that can support potential and existing female entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship education in schools is supported by the Austrian employer organisation.

Eradicate stereotypes and create role models

Many organisations interviewed in the context of this mapping exercise suggested actions to address gender stereotypes against female entrepreneurship and women as entrepreneurs. Such stereotypes may refer to the (lack of) capabilities of female investors and fund managers or the capacity of female start-up founders to manage their companies (Estonia, Hungary and Poland). The Entrepreneurial Women Network in Poland referred to deeply rooted stereotypes whereby women are believed to be neither successful entrepreneurs nor good investors, which may lead to the conclusion that there is no need for further support – hence perpetuating gender inequalities.

Promote broader gender diversity measures

Promoting gender diversity measures more widely in the business community and in society can produce a positive direct or indirect effect. Public research results on gender diversity effects in the society and economy can also be promoted.

A recent study by the International Finance Corporation (IFC, 2019) recommends gender diversity among the mainstream investment funds. Through a questionnaire addressed to female and male fund partners, the study sought to capture

views of general partners on low gender diversity. The views of each gender were reported separately to allow for better analysis. There were three possible answers to choose from regarding low gender diversity in the finance sector:

- difficulty finding qualified female talent
- low female interest in private equity
- local norms reducing female leadership

What makes this interesting is the way female and male general partners responded: 52% of male general partners reported difficulty finding qualified female talent, while only 21% of female general partners agreed with this. Low female interest in private equity was confirmed by 46% of male general partners, but only 14% of female respondents. This clearly shows that there are gender stereotypes in identifying and addressing the

problem of low gender diversity, and the lack of female representation can be a barrier to making the finance sector and workplace gender balanced. This, in turn, can affect decisions as to how investments are made and how investees are chosen.

The IFC report suggests that certain barriers, such as closed networks, unconscious bias, or a lack of gender diversity commitments, require efforts from several stakeholders. The suggested recommendations to promote gender balance include gender-disaggregated data on women in funds and portfolio companies, strategies for gender balance in investments, strategies for gender-balanced human resources policies within funds (for example, equal paternity leave, supporting flexible work initiatives, actively pursuing gender-diverse talent), and assessment of implementation of strategies.

Case study: Doppel (UK)

Fotini Markopoulou is the CEO and co-founder of this young technology company producing hardware and wearables. The London-based company has four co-founders (two female and two male) and a small workforce of six people. Based on scientific research, their product is a wearable wristband that reduces stress and increases focus by generating a sensation of the heartbeat. As an academic in theoretical physics, Dr Markopoulou is well accustomed to working in a male-dominated environment.

Dr Markopoulou's financing journey to get the company off the ground started with small contributions from family and friends (£40,000 or €44,000). After that, the company secured a grant from Deutsche Bank, followed by a Horizon 2020 grant and another grant from Innovate UK. This amount of funding enabled the company to run for the first year with just four co-founders. In the next level of financing, they launched a crowdfunding campaign on Kickstarter. From that point on, and while promoting their product more widely, contacts through San Francisco technology entrepreneurs led the co-founders to a Chinese manufacturer who secured a financing deal for them. This was a significant private investment for an early stage company. Different connections led the company to two financing networks, the Cambridge Angels and Angel Academe (female investors), who made investments in their company. The CEO confirms that it all started with personal connections which led to the next connection. The company is not a member of any business networks; however, one of the co-founders is an enterprise fellow at the Royal Academy of Engineering, which has been a very useful connection. Additionally, Cambridge Angels and the Angel Academe have a background in technology. It is harder to secure funding at an early stage, and this is critical for the success of the company as competition in the industry is fierce.

When asked about her experience with investors, Dr Markopoulou said, 'people assess me rather than the company.' The CEO feels comfortable pitching before a line-up of mostly male investors but she finds that 'you have to prove yourself more.' She comes across as a strong female leader. 'As a woman I usually talk to older men who are happy to give advice to a younger woman. I am asking for advice obviously and they run large businesses and I do not, but I also know my business very well,' she commented. Through mentoring from a female entrepreneur, Dr Markopoulou received valuable advice that she would not have received from a man as, according to her, men and women need to present themselves differently.

Selling hardware in London is not as easy as in San Francisco. It appears that investors in the country are interested, but they are not always confident in assessing this type of business as they have never invested in businesses of this kind. Investors not only invest with money, but they also provide valuable advice to early stage companies. Being unfamiliar with this type of technology business, investors cannot provide advice or access to networks. Ultimately, the investors have to choose between business proposals that they are familiar with and other investment propositions which they are less familiar with.

Dr Markopoulou and her team have raised a significant amount so far (£2 million, or €2.2 million) with the aim to raise £3 million (€3.3 million) by February 2020, which will be used to expand production and grow their workforce from 6 people to 40 people by 2021.

When considering financing in support of female entrepreneurs, Dr Markopoulou thinks that grants are very useful, but they should be more flexible. For early stage technology companies, using a grant to try to prioritise research and development may inhibit them from delivering to their timeline.

She also feels that women-specific programmes and some dedicated funding to women-led enterprises (with at least one female co-founder) could be publicly supported. Networking initiatives are also of great assistance. Currently, there are no organised networks for female CEOs in the tech industry, and there is a lot to be learnt. Dr Markopoulou commented, 'the people I find more useful are the ones that are ahead of me, but not too far to have forgotten what it is like to be here.'

Financial journey of female entrepreneurs

Female start-up entrepreneurs very often start with their own money and money from friends and family (Verheul and Thurik, 2001; Coleman and Robb, 2012). Some may then seek a small loan (microcredit) which is relatively easy to access, particularly while interest rates are low, and loans are often provided with public credit guarantee schemes. Many women have availed of microcredit offers, particularly women in rural areas and areas far away from large cities with certain geographical disadvantages.

There is much at stake with credit and finance expansion, and for many women, unfortunately, the financial journey may stop here due to lack of information, attitude towards risk, investors' bias and a lack of targeted support availability. However, a distinction should be made between high-growth and low-growth entrepreneurs, as the former are more likely to seek alternative finance sources (Gundry and Welsch, 2001).

Small business grants are very popular instruments initiated by state authorities (business support and development agencies, innovation funds, etc.) with female start-up entrepreneurs or would-be female entrepreneurs in mind. Grants are often connected with accelerators and incubators that provide the space and small ecosystem for developing and growing ideas into businesses.

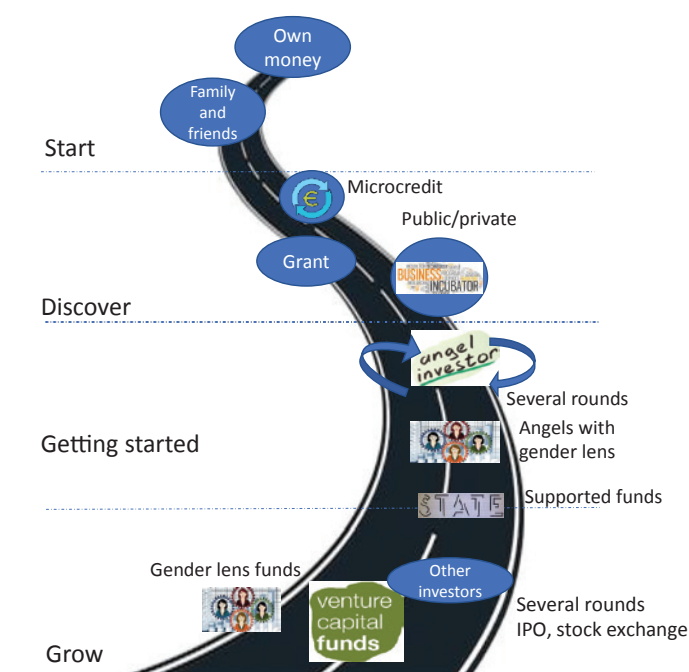
Small amounts of angel funding can mark the beginning of a more confident request for financial capital. In this respect, business angels with a gender lens play a significant role in supporting female entrepreneurs. Often created by female investors, gender lens investments are

an example of social impact entrepreneurship. Female gender lens investors are aware of the difficulties female entrepreneurs face within the world of investment and can possibly shape the industry. This can be achieved by bringing more diversity in investments. Female entrepreneurs can request several rounds of angel funding before they access venture capital. Again, funds with a gender lens in their investment portfolio can help direct capital from limited and general partners, so that they can serve a part of the market not reached by mainstream investors.

Learning the tricks of the game, how to prepare the business case and how to pitch in front of investors are necessary steps that are often learned while in accelerators and incubators or through participation in networking and investors' events. Many public innovation agencies (for example, the Swedish agency Vinnova) target innovative companies and seek ways to connect them with universities and knowledge centres, entrepreneurial ecosystems in their own and other countries, and other organisations. Research has shown that innovative companies are well connected with universities, research organisations, other companies, customers, supply chains, and so on (Eurofound, 2017).

Lastly, this study finds that state investment funds in collaboration with banks and private funds provide capital to female entrepreneurs. A simplified form of the financial journey of female entrepreneurs is shown in Figure 8. The journey continues with some of the start-ups going public, but this takes time and the revenues required for this are quite high (hundreds of millions of euro). This is outside the scope of this study.

Figure 8: The financial journey of female entrepreneurs (with emerging gender lens funds depicted)



Source: Author's elaboration

Case study: Eatit (Sweden)

Theresia Silander Hagström is the co-founder of the young Swedish health technology and food technology company Eatit. The company collects health data from their customers (blood samples, information on their dietary habits, lifestyle, etc.) and then provides tailor-made recommendations on how they can improve their diet (through dieticians) and lifestyle. Various algorithms have been developed to drive the company's decisions and provide customer advice.

Ms Silander Hagström's financing journey started with grants from Vinnova (Sweden's innovation agency) and funding for legal advice through other public organisations. In the next stage, her company received funding from a venture capital fund (Almi Invest), as well as through an incubator (KTH Innovation). Contacts with Vinnova and other beneficiary companies led Ms Silander Hagström to the accelerator programme TINC. The month-long programme took place in Silicon Valley and Vinnova financed two-thirds of the programme fees. Ms Silander Hagström said, 'Without this funding we would not have been able to afford to participate in the programme... you learn a lot there, the programme development [coaching] saved [me] half a year to one year.'

Ms Silander Hagström is in the process of launching the full version of the company's product and will then start seeking capital from investors (once they have met certain growth milestones, otherwise investors would not be prepared to invest in them). 'There are many investors who are established in Stockholm and it is easy to just meet up and have coffee,' she says.

Ms Silander Hagström established contacts with investors through H2 Health Hub (a co-working space), start-up events and personal contacts. As the company is at the start-up phase, they do not yet have experience in accessing finance and funding barriers. Investors are keen to come to pitching events, but the question remains: How many of them are willing to invest? Ms Silander Hagström thinks that investors may have an unconscious bias against women-led enterprises. She also understands that some private funds and business angels have started assessing the gender diversity of companies in their portfolios, while others are actively seeking companies with female founders.

Her experience with investors is limited, but she is working towards getting the company ready for investment. She is preparing herself for pitching events and is looking forward to receiving feedback; however, she admits that she is 'slightly concerned that [she] may be stereotyped in the future' when the first series of investment is launched. The local ecosystem (accelerator) is quite favourable: 'We sit in a place with companies that work with similar things [to us], and we have learned a lot from them' says Ms Silander Hagström.

Cooperating with other start-ups and learning from other larger, more established companies is an invaluable experience and the key to success. In Silicon Valley, start-ups are seen by other companies as a tool for solving their problems, so they are open to cooperation and the entire process from the first meeting to the product launch is very quick. In contrast, the process in Sweden is much longer, and large companies may be hesitant to cooperate with start-ups. 'As a small start-up it can be very difficult to reach out to large companies,' Ms Silander Hagström explains.

Feedback from female start-up entrepreneurs

The present study has dealt with private investment funds, the reasons for their creation and public schemes. To complement the picture, women-led start-ups have been approached with a view to hear their own experience of the early steps of their company's development. Four entrepreneurs from the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK were interviewed to discuss their financing journey and capital barriers. The companies were selected through contacts with national women's associations and the private investment funds included in this study (the study team selected one of their investees). The small number of interviewees was therefore not random and does not allow for generalisation. The young companies selected are in the technology (two companies, wearables and gaming), health and food technology (one company) and home healthcare (one company) sectors. An overrepresentation of the technology sector may also skew the findings as

these sectors are more likely to attract the attention of investors. The information provided through the interviews is used to better explain some of the findings of the mapping work.

Three out of four female entrepreneurs have accessed private investment capital, including some through different rounds. They all consider external funding critical or very important. The cases presented here suggest that the technology companies have more difficulties accessing capital than the social care company. So, the argument that female entrepreneurs do not attract investments because they start companies in traditional 'female' sectors (which may not be appealing to investors) does not seem to hold in this case.

The two interviewees in the technology sector indicate that female entrepreneurs may be faced with gender stereotyping from investors but have learned how to move around in a male-dominated investor environment. These well-educated entrepreneurs need funding to expand their

business, not more training. Their financing journey shows that they are more likely to encounter a male investor than a female one. Two of them have already received investment from female-owned funds that apply gender criteria in their investments (for instance, TheNextWoman Fund and Angel Academe).

Additionally, all the female entrepreneurs have made use of public support schemes and EU funds, in the form of grants, accelerators, incubators, loans, networking events, training, etc. Accelerators are the breeding place for many business ideas and create an ecosystem that brings together entrepreneurs and investors. Some of the business ideas developed were first tested there before reaching the wider market. This local ecosystem is very beneficial to all participants, as entrepreneurs can share and exchange views with each other. Networking events for start-ups are also a good place for budding entrepreneurs to develop personal contacts with both investors and other entrepreneurs. Nearly all female

interviewees used them as a stepping stone for their next financing round: in the words of one of the interviewees, 'connections lead to connections'. Grants and loans made product development (prototypes) and concept development possible before business plans were fully advanced. Those schemes were particularly useful when the entrepreneurs took their first steps into the business world which confirms the relevance and plethora of such schemes found in the 19 countries. Tapping on personal contacts and networks opened doors to the investors' community. Female networks are considered of high value.

The experience of all four companies confirms research findings that networks and collaboration with universities and other companies are critical to a company's success. Innovative companies rely heavily on collaboration with universities and research centres; they access large and diverse networks for knowledge creation and tap into external ideas to create value for their company.

Case study: Friendbase (Sweden)

Friendbase is a small social gaming company with three co-founders, located in Gothenburg, Sweden. Deborah Lygonis is one of the co-founders who works with a team of three people (developers and a community manager), while the other two co-founders are not engaged in operational business. It is a mixed group with a 50/50 split in men and women. A board, of which one of the members is an investor, oversees the company. The chat rooms and games are played by many young people who, in the future, will also have access to learning-oriented quizzes developed by the company.

If the next round of financing is successful, it will be possible for the company to expand to Middle Eastern and Asian markets. The capital required is mainly for research and development and has a twofold objective: ensuring a safe and friendly online environment using gamification and artificial intelligence and creating a digital mentor, again through artificial intelligence to support young people experiencing difficulties in online situations (for instance, abusive language). They have not yet acquired patents, but they are developing their own software tools. Research cooperation with universities is underway but has not yet come to fruition.

Ms Lygonis is familiar with the financing rules and actively participates in all start-up events for accessing venture capital. She also subscribes to European calls and Vinnova's newsletters. Friendbase have received investment from business angels and will continue doing so in the future. It also had support from an accelerator programme (TINC) which allowed it to acquire experience through a visit to Silicon Valley. Running a small business and at the same time networking and searching for events and investors is quite demanding and at times frustrating. In particular, Ms Lygonis gets frustrated by the 'huge difference in amounts raised by [male] and [female] entrepreneurs.' Most of the time, Ms Lygonis has faced young, male investors. Ms Lygonis explains that she has received 'recommendations to bring in a young guy as a CEO to act as front figure,' in order to appeal to certain types of investors. The company board did not consider this credible or acceptable, so they decided to look for capital in other investment circles. Other financing streams have also been sought in collaboration with other companies.

Ms Lygonis has first-hand experience of being stereotyped while seeking capital. 'I was sitting at a meeting in Stockholm where the investor said straight out that the most common companies they invest in are those with 25-year-old guys hanging [around] SUP46* playing billiards and [going] for beers. I told him that there was nothing I could [possibly] do to change my age, gender and looks' she said. Ms Lygonis points out that her company was one of 100 companies selected from a list of 90,000 applications to pitch at the start-up event Startup Istanbul. To her delight, the company came first in the pitching competition.

What's next for Ms Lygonis? She thinks that going global is the way forward and plans to turn her attention to the Middle East and Asia.

Following her experience as a beneficiary of public programmes (such as Vinnova, TINC, etc.) Ms Lygonis suggests that applications for public funds should not require the gender and name of the applicant.

Note: *SUP46 = A hub for start-ups in Stockholm

Case study: Mantelaar (the Netherlands)

Mantelaar connects elderly people and people requiring care at home with care providers. In the Netherlands *mantelzorg* is a term which refers to care provided by a family member, friend, or through another informal, private route. Mantelaar aims to support older people and *mantelzorgers* (carers) by connecting people in need of home care with students (and volunteers) in the medical or healthcare field. Mantelaar is a small company with eight people in managerial roles, including one woman. Barbara Groeneveld is a co-founder and former owner of Mantelaar, and since stepping down she remains a shareholder in the company.

Ms Groeneveld reflects on how women in other sectors provided advice and support for free, which she says was really valuable during the company's first steps. Being a member of different networks provided inputs other than financing during the initial stages of the company. Cooperation with universities (to make contact with medical students and a pool of social carers), the Lansingerland municipality (with whom they established a service contract), health insurers and others was vital for the success of the company.

Ms Groeneveld's financial journey started in 2014 with a crowdfunding initiative that brought in €170,000. Her company was also supported by a business incubator when they started pitching their idea at start-up events for social economy enterprises. At the same time, the co-founders approached the Royal Heidema Foundation (Koninklijke Nederlandse Heidemamatschappij, KNHM) which provides advice and support to social and civil action projects. KNHM provided seed capital (€160,000) to Mantelaar and gained a stake in the company, becoming the majority investor. This was followed by another investment by TheNextWoman Fund (one of the funds included in this study) which provided 10% of the capital during that investment round. TheNextWoman Fund is a large network of female business angels and investors which provided Ms Groeneveld with useful business contacts, formal and informal advice, and support. Being part of the incubator allowed Mantelaar access to both KNHM and TheNextWoman Fund. Currently, they are looking for scale-up capital in order to grow and move the company to the next level.

Overall, Ms Groeneveld confirms that she 'never felt too much of a barrier when getting external financing', but she realises that other women do. She thinks that a possible explanation is that her company is small and 'has always requested small amounts from investors.' She also found it troubling at one pitching event for female start-ups that her male co-founder was not given the space to pitch as the event was only meant for women.

Ms Groeneveld has used public support through different means. For instance, she has participated in networking events for SMEs organised by the Municipality of Amsterdam. The company also received a gift of €15,000 from the Dutch bank Rabobank as part of their initiative to support social economy enterprises.

When asked how the entrepreneurial ecosystem for female entrepreneurs could be improved, Ms Groeneveld suggested that more female networking events should be organised. These events may be perceived as 'soft' measures, but in practice they are very useful. Her experience was very positive as she received extra support and advice from other female entrepreneurs, even if it was not necessarily connected to or leading to financing. Women's networks are less common than networks intended for male entrepreneurs, which tend to spring up more organically. Ms Groeneveld also makes it clear that excluding men is not the way to encourage female entrepreneurship.

Summary

This chapter showed how countries are grouped in terms of their financial support to female entrepreneurs. Only three countries (Poland, Spain and the UK) were found to provide all types of financial support, private investment through dedicated funds, public financing and capacity building, and other support measures. The group of seven countries with existing private funds with a gender lens consists of countries located in north-west, central and southern Europe. This group has grown in the last few years.

Most countries support capacity-building measures. Out of 28 Member States, 16 provide financing to female entrepreneurs, while some of them have supplementary measures in place. With the emergence of private funds

with gender criteria, the financial journey of women in some countries is becoming more interesting and hopefully more rewarding. The cross-border reach of these funds presents an interesting development with great potential for investments.

The views of female start-up entrepreneurs shed some light on the type of difficulties they encounter while seeking capital. They are well educated (and therefore do not require training), they are in the right industry (meaning they are fundable), yet they must fight harder than their male counterparts to get access to capital. Investors have an affinity for certain products or services, and often have expectations about the ideal profile of an entrepreneur. Eradicating stereotypes, promoting gender diversity within the finance sector and supporting gender lens investing could address some of the challenges.

4 Conclusions and policy pointers

Much research on female entrepreneurship and the constraints in starting up and growing companies has been carried out in the last 20 years. Several studies (Constantinides et al, 2006; Carter et al, 2007; Coleman and Robb, 2009) have investigated women's access to debt capital; however, there are fewer studies on women's access to venture capital and equity. Some studies suggest that women have difficulties raising angel investment, venture capital or equity capital, and when they do, they raise less than male entrepreneurs. Some of the barriers to financing which are frequently mentioned include:

- women do not have access (as users) to angel investment and venture capital
- women are significantly underrepresented among the decision-makers in private equity and venture capital companies (a strongly male-dominated sector)
- women tend to concentrate on service sectors which are less appealing to investors

While there are articles and studies referring to the creation of angel investment and venture capital in the US and other global regions deliberately including gender among their investment criteria, very little evidence exists in Europe on the incidence of such financing and its characteristics. This study was more focused on the 'supply' side, the angel investment and venture capital industry (and the reasons behind the setting up of such funds) and public financing and support, rather than the 'demand' side.

National studies in EU Member States confirm the difficulties female entrepreneurs face in accessing finance. Private financing, angel funding and venture capital were found to be disproportionately low in many EU Member States. Some women and women's business associations mentioned that female and male entrepreneurs have different starting points in their entrepreneurial journey and are, therefore, unequal. Often, society's views towards the division of roles in the home and in public spheres may not be positively inclined towards female entrepreneurship. Sociocultural factors, such as societal views about the entrepreneurial model being considered as predominantly male, may deter women from starting their own businesses and finance institutions from investing in female entrepreneurs. Other factors such as women's educational choices (influenced by family and societal stereotypes), an unequal share of family responsibilities, the types of businesses women start and personal wealth play a major role.

Continuous public support is still required. Many national associations take the view that eradicating gender stereotypes in society and creating role models for female entrepreneurs should be among the actions supported by the public sector, women's associations and industry associations (for example, SME associations).

Data collected from EU Member States and Norway reveal that there has been an emerging body of business angels and venture capital funds created to invest in women-led or gender diverse companies (with women among their founders or represented on their boards, management team or in their workforce). In the last few years, 11 funds have been set up in 7 countries in Europe (Belgium, Czechia, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the UK). Some countries have more than one fund (the Netherlands, Spain and the UK). Despite the small number of funds created, this may produce a remarkable change in the financing landscape regarding funding opportunities for female entrepreneurs. Through their investments, these ventures are also making a social impact. The full impact of their investments cannot yet be fully appreciated, as nearly all of the funds are very young (most were created in the last five years and therefore are start-ups themselves). However, three of them have already raised €68 million.

It is also noteworthy that many of the funds (6 out of 11) operate across national borders, applying their gender lens investment criteria at the European level. This can contribute to the proliferation of such angels and funds as well as enlarging the pool of women-led companies eligible for investment (investees).

With regard to the underrepresentation of women in the decision-making mechanisms of investment funds, a major financing obstacle for female entrepreneurs, this study sought to explore the gender diversity of the funds themselves and determine whether it makes a difference to their decision to invest in women-led enterprises. Data collected from the national reports and more in-depth interviews with three managers of investment funds bring to light the gender composition of the funds.

It is remarkable that all funds analysed are gender diverse (at least 50% of the founding members are women) while some (four) are fully women owned. This may explain the inclusion of gender criteria in their investment decisions and the selection of companies for their portfolio investment. This supports the point made in the literature and research (for instance, the International Finance Corporation) suggesting that more efforts should be concentrated on achieving gender diverse teams in finance companies. Such a move will impact the finance firms themselves (as gender diverse teams are more likely to make better decisions), as well as 'entrepreneurs receiving capital to grow their businesses' (IFC, 2019).

With limited presence of private gender lens investing in EU Member States and Norway, the public sector has been providing financing through traditional means such as grants, credit and credit guarantee schemes, tax credits and other stronger measures such as investment funds. With investments in excess of €310 million, 16 Member States support female entrepreneurs or would-be entrepreneurs with capital essential for starting

up a business, accessing credit, developing a product (for instance, essential research and development for new products), direct investment, etc. Additionally, public support is accessible to a large share of female entrepreneurs in 19 countries. More than 370,000 women have participated in training activities. The public support schemes assist female entrepreneurs to prepare a business plan, access legal advice, get access to investors through networking and investment events, network with other women, get access to mentoring services, and so on. Other organisations such as voluntary and social impact organisations and women's associations appear to support female entrepreneurship initiatives, for example, information sharing, training and networking opportunities.

Both private funds and public organisations are in principle open to all economic sectors; however there is a preference for certain sectors, such as high technology, ICT, environment and renewables, health technology, digital publishing, and so on. The public sector support tends to be slightly more open to other sectors, such as personal services, manufacturing (in general), tourism and hospitality, and agro-industry. Evidence from the female entrepreneurs in this study shows that, even in the technology industry, which appeals to many investors, there are still financing barriers and gender bias.

The female start-up business owners interviewed for this study are well educated, they run innovative businesses with research and business awards, they operate in a fundable economic sector, and yet they must fight hard to access the funding required. There is an enormous potential for private funds created with gender considerations in their mission to fill the gap. However, it is also a responsibility for the entire private investment industry to achieve a gender balance within its decision-making mechanisms and attract and appoint more female fund managers.

Overall, underinvestment in female entrepreneurs means that there is underutilised capacity in the economy which inhibits growth and job opportunities and hampers equal opportunities for women and men. Policymakers should ensure that enterprise policies work well for both women and men (as well as other more specific groups in society).

Policy pointers

The findings of this study show that financing for female entrepreneurs remains an issue in most European countries. Many women's associations confirmed the need for more positive action. The perceived market gap for investments in female entrepreneurs and the male-dominated finance industry have been the motivation for the creation of funds with a gender focus.

Support gender lens investing

Gender lens investments started as a niche initiative, but considering the amounts raised so far by some gender lens investors, they can become a significant vehicle for supporting capital funding for female entrepreneurs. Female and male investors who are keen to use their

investment capital to both achieve financial return and have a positive impact on female entrepreneurs should be informed of the existing opportunities. Women and men have taken initiatives in several countries to form business angels and venture capital funds investing in female entrepreneurs. They have intentionally developed gender criteria and incorporated them into their investment decisions.

Supporting gender lens investing increases awareness among female entrepreneurs about the available capital sources and their potential use. It also raises awareness among private investors and investment funds about the potential of such investments that can create profits as well as have a social impact. The whole finance sector should be encouraged to endorse and actively promote gender lens investing. Disregarding 10.3 million female entrepreneurs in Europe (30% of all entrepreneurs) is neither a sound financial decision nor a socially acceptable option.

Supporting private funds which invest in companies that perform well and have female leaders as well as women in other senior management positions may encourage other companies to genuinely embrace gender diversity so that they have better access to capital.

It is advisable to regularly monitor trends in gender lens investing and map the incidence of such funds in Europe and their contribution to female entrepreneurship. European organisations such as the European Commission's Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW) or the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST); the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE); and Eurofound could potentially drive and support such a monitoring tool.

Initiatives like the ones suggested above should be supported by public organisations, women's associations, finance sector associations, investors, and private and social impact organisations. As these funds are often international or European in nature, they should be encouraged to make investments beyond their national borders to enlarge the pool of investees and the reach of these funds. Some of the newer funds already do this. Support from European funds, European bodies (such as the EIB) and other EU initiatives should be further fostered; as this study shows, they are already making a significant contribution.

Promote gender diversity within mainstream finance institutions

The underrepresentation of women in fund management and decision-making mechanisms in the venture capital, equity and business angel sector could reduce opportunities for female entrepreneurs to access finance. Measures to increase gender diversity in the sector should be strongly encouraged. In addition, goals should be set as to how to achieve gender balance. Indeed, bringing more women into venture capital firms and institutional investors could reduce bias in decision-making, help investors to better understand women-led businesses and the markets they serve, and widen the pool of potential investees.

To address some of the problems that female fund managers face, human resources policies should set measurable gender diversity and talent management goals, introduce work–life balance for both women and men, make management accountable for gender diversity practices, and introduce annual reports showing progress towards gender diversity. The finance sector should encourage the design of investment plans with gender considerations and annual accounts that show progress supported by gender disaggregated data.

Attracting more female investors and fund managers in the conventional business angels and venture capital firms can potentially improve women’s access to such capital. International finance organisations (such as the IFC) and studies demonstrate the economic benefits (for example, stability within banking institutions and improved investment decisions) of gender-balanced management teams and boards. A number of different organisations can take on the role of promoting gender diversity within financial institutions: finance sector associations, SME organisations, industry organisations, state pension funds, enterprise support agencies, development agencies, women’s associations, and so on.

Continue to target public financial support

Public investments in female entrepreneurs should be continued through policy schemes that are proven to work well with users. *Grants, accelerators, incubators, credit schemes and credit guarantee schemes* are widely used in many countries. They can play a significant role in preparing and testing business ideas before approaching private investors, linking budding entrepreneurs with the finance ecosystem and providing credit. Raising awareness campaigns on the financing options available to women entrepreneurs could close the information gap for both women and potential investors.

Some countries have taken an even stronger position by setting up and co-creating *state-funded angel and venture capital funds* (for instance, France, Ireland, Slovakia and the UK). Additionally, public female entrepreneurship support programmes could be directed towards seed and early stage investments, where there is a clear market failure. Venture capital companies investing in women-led companies should be invited to participate in competitive calls that direct investments in key sectors identified in the national entrepreneurship strategy. Public support can, additionally, invest a proportion of the investment made by the funds to increase the value of the total investment. In that way, the public sector can influence the finance sector, showing support for a more gender-balanced investment model.

Geography is an important factor in economic and finance decisions. *Rural areas* in Europe may be underserved by private and public schemes and tailor-made credit schemes could be of great assistance to female entrepreneurs. Microcredit could be a starting point for women in rural or remote areas so that they can move from being home-based business owners to microenterprise or small company owners. Subsequent

financing rounds can follow once the companies reach a stage where they are likely to attract investment.

Capacity-building support measures for female entrepreneurs and would-be entrepreneurs are very beneficial. Training on business matters combined with finance literacy and mentoring can have a positive impact on entrepreneurs. Organising networking activities and events where early stage female entrepreneurs can meet with other female entrepreneurs and investors can enlarge their collaboration opportunities. Women who receive financial support, advice and training can benefit significantly from the combined package offered. Other European resources such as the European Commission’s initiative WEGate (European Gateway for Women’s Entrepreneurship) should be utilised by national level organisations for strengthening capacity-building initiatives.

Furthermore, promoting *female entrepreneurial role models* and reducing gender segregation in education and employment (gender-based occupational segregation affects access to economic resources) can contribute to reducing gender inequality. This should be a priority at national and European levels. It is of utmost importance to eradicate *gender stereotypes and gendered perceptions*. Stereotypes and perceptions can impede social and economic progress. Biases and assumptions about female entrepreneurs’ capabilities should be challenged at all levels, from family and school to work levels. This type of activity should be supported by public authorities, women’s associations, business organisations and other groups. Other policy measures that address *socioeconomic barriers* include those that promote work–life balance for women and men and provide affordable childcare services (these are essential during the business start-up phase). It is striking that only a minority of national policy initiatives targeting female entrepreneurship include access to childcare services.

Investing more in *gender statistics and female entrepreneurship data* would allow better comparisons of the financial support provided to women, as well as good quality *impact assessments* of public policies in aid of female entrepreneurship.

National initiatives are encouraged to make use of the EU funds in support of female entrepreneurship, as some countries have already successfully done. It is important that any policy initiatives taken are closely aligned with other core enterprise support programmes (for instance, mentoring, networking, training and childcare).

Promote innovation policies and female entrepreneurship

Government policies on innovation can be shaped to have a gender dimension and a positive impact on gender equality. National innovation policies aiming at addressing substantial industrial and societal challenges could introduce a strand for female entrepreneurs with innovative ideas that meet the innovation and industrial policies’ objectives. For instance, innovation policies with clear priorities – either sectoral or thematic – such as clean

growth, artificial intelligence, health and care services, ageing population and demographics can encourage female scientists, researchers and women with a business idea to participate in competitive calls. A large share of students in sciences, technological sectors, life science and other fields are women and, through innovation policies, they should be encouraged to try new business ideas. Also, other women with less technological entrepreneurial activities should be assisted to adapt to digitalisation.

Additionally, regional and local authorities with a mandate on innovation and industrial policy implementation can put in place a gender dimension for such initiatives. This approach provides a policy framework in which this policy priority (female entrepreneurship) can be more concretely supported. The EU Prize for Women Innovators is a good example and provides stimulation for adopting similar schemes at the national level.

Bibliography

- Acket, S., Blond-Hanten, C., Lejealle, B., Martin, L. and Segura, J. (CEPS/Instead) (2011), *L'entrepreneuriat féminin et masculin au Luxembourg*, Ministry of Equal Opportunities, Luxembourg.
- Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2019), 'Opinion on the future gender equality policy after 2019: Old and new challenges and priorities', 19 December.
- Amway Europe (2018), *Amway Global Entrepreneurship Report: What drives the entrepreneurial spirit?* GfK, Nuremberg.
- Alpeza M., Oberman, M., Has, M. (2018), *Small and medium enterprises report – Croatia 2018 including the results of GEM – Global Entrepreneurship Monitor research for Croatia 2017*, Singer, S. (ed.), CEPOR, Zagreb.
- Becker-Blease, J. R. and Sohl, J. E. (2007), 'Do women-owned businesses have equal access to angel capital?' *Journal of Business Venturing*, Vol. 22, No. 4, pp. 503–521.
- Biegel, S., Hunt, S. M. and Kuhlman, S. (2017), *Project Sage: Tracking venture capital with a gender lens*, Wharton Social Impact Initiative, The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
- Børsen (2017), 'Iværksætternes guldhuld efterlyser kvinder i netværk', 5 September.
- Bloomberg, (2018), 'Top 10 things everyone should know about women consumers', 11 January.
- Bruneel, J., Ratinho, T., Clarysse, B. and Groen, A. (2012), 'The evolution of business incubators: Comparing demand and supply of business incubation services across different incubator generations', *Technovation*, Vol. 32, No. 2, pp. 110–121.
- Brush, C. G. (1992), 'Research on women business owners: Past trends, a new perspective and future directions', *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, Vol. 16, No. 4, pp. 5–30.
- Brush, C. G., De Bruin, A. and Welter, F. (2014), 'Advancing theory development in venture creation: Signposts for understanding gender', in Lewis, K. V., Henry, C., Gatewood, E. J. and Watson, J. (eds.), *Women's entrepreneurship in the 21st century: An international multi-level research analysis*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, UK, pp. 11–31.
- Brush, C. G., Edelman, L. F., Manolova, T. and Welter, F. (2018), 'A gendered look at entrepreneurship ecosystems', *Small Business Economics*, Vol. 53, No. 2, pp. 393–408.
- Brush, C. G., Greene, P. G., Hart, M. M. and Saporito, P. (2001), 'Patterns of venture capital funding: Is gender a factor?', *Venture Capital Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 62–83.
- Brush, C. G., Carter, N. M., Gatewood, E. J., Green, P. G. and Hart, M. M. (2001), *The Diana project: Women business owners and equity capital: The myths dispelled*, Kauffman Foundation, Kansas City, USA.
- Brush, C. G., Carter, N. M., Gatewood, C. N., Greene P. G. and Hart, M. M. (2004), *Clearing the hurdles: Women building high-growth businesses*, Financial Times Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, US.
- Bufdir (Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs) (undated), *Tidsbruk og kjønnsforskjeller*, web page, accessed 27 September 2019.
- Carter, S. and Rosa, P. (1998), 'The financing of male- and female-owned businesses', *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 225–242.
- Carter, S., Shaw, E., Lam, W. and Wilson, F. M. (2007), 'Gender, entrepreneurship and bank lending: The criteria and processes used by bank loan officers in assessing applications', *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, Vol. 31, No. 3, pp. 427–444.
- Ceptureanu, S. I. and Ceptureanu, E. G. (2016), 'Women entrepreneurship in Romania: the case of North East Development Region', *Management and Economics Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 20–32.
- Coleman, S. (2000), 'Access to capital and terms of credit: A comparison of men- and women-owned small businesses', *Journal of Small Business Management*, Vol. 38, No. 3, pp. 37–52.
- Coleman, S. and Robb, A. M. (2009), 'A comparison of new firm financing by gender: Evidence from the Kauffman firm survey data', *Small Business Economics*, Vol. 33, pp. 397–411.
- Coleman, S. and Robb, A. M. (2012), 'Financing women-owned firms: A review of recent literature', in Cumming, D. (ed.), *Oxford handbook of entrepreneurial finance*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 721–737.
- Constantinidis, C., Cornet, A. and Asandei, S. (2006), 'Financing of women-owned ventures: The impact of gender and other owner- and firm-related variables', *Venture Capital*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 133–157.
- Cosh, A. D., Hughes, A., Bullock, A. and Milner, I. (2008), *Financing UK small and medium-sized enterprises: The 2007 survey: A report from the Center for Business Research*, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK, p.134.
- Cressy, R. (2008), 'Venture capital', in Casson, M., Yeung, B., Basu, A. and Wadeson, N. (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of entrepreneurship*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 353–386.
- Cuberes, D. and Teignier, M. (2016), 'Aggregate effects of gender gaps in the labor market: A quantitative estimate', *Journal of Human Capital*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 1–32.
- Cumming, D. (ed.) (2012), *The Oxford handbook of venture capital*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

- Dance, A. (2019), 'How business-savvy scientists can find success in the risky start-up world', *Nature*, Vol. 566, No. 7743 pp. 285–287.
- Danish Growth Fund (Vækstfonden) (2018), *Kvindelige hovedrolleindehavere 2018*, web page, accessed 27 September 2019.
- Davis, A. E., Renzulli, L. A. and Aldrich, H. E. (2006), 'Mixing or matching? The influence of voluntary associations on the occupational diversity and density of small business owners' networks', *Work and Occupations*, Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 42–72.
- Dawson, J., Kersley, R. and Natella, S. (2016), *The CS Gender 3000: The reward for change*, Credit Suisse, Zurich, Switzerland.
- De Ondernemer (2018), 'Investeringsfondsen financieren zelden startups van vrouwen en dat is een gemiste kans', 28 September.
- Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (undated), *Female Entrepreneurship*, web page, available at <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/Business-Sectoral-Initiatives/Entrepreneurship-/Female-Entrepreneurship/>, accessed 3 October 2019.
- Dodescu, A., Bădulescu, A., Giurgiu, A. and Pop-Cohuț, I. C. (2011), 'Female entrepreneurship in western Romania: Research results and policy recommendations', *Theoretical and Applied Economics*, Vol. XVIII, No. 1(554), pp. 25–48.
- Eagly, A. H. and Karau, S. J. (2002), 'Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders', *Psychological Review*, Vol. 109, No. 3, pp. 573–598.
- EIGE (European Institute for Gender Equality) (2014), *Study on area F of the Beijing Platform for Action: Women and the economy*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- ENUT (Estonian Women's Studies and Resource Center) (2013), *Naisettevõtluse edendamise ja kasvustrateegiad*, Tallinn.
- Entrepreneurship Promotion Fund (2018), *Report on loans granted under the instrument Entrepreneurship Promotion Fund 2014 – 2020*, web page, available at https://www.esinvesticijos.lt/lt/finansavimas/patvirtintos_priemones/subsidijos-verslo-pradziai, accessed 25 October 2019.
- Eurofound (2017), *Exploring self-employment in the European Union*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- Eurofound (2019), *Cooperatives and social enterprises: Work and employment in selected countries*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- European Commission (2008), *Evaluation on policy: Promotion of women innovators and entrepreneurship: Final report*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- European Commission (2011), *Social Business Initiative: Creating a favourable climate for social enterprises, key stakeholders in the social economy and innovation*, COM(2011)682 final, Brussels.
- European Commission (2012), *Entrepreneurship determinants: Culture and capabilities*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- European Commission (2013), *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan: Reigniting the entrepreneurial spirit in Europe*, COM(2012)795 final, Brussels.
- European Commission (2014), *Statistical data on women entrepreneurs in Europe*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- European Commission (2016), *Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016–2019*, SWD(2015)278 final, Brussels.
- European Commission (2018a), *Sustainable development in the European Union: Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context: 2018 edition*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- European Commission (2018b), *Women in the digital age*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- European Commission (2018c), *The future of gender equality strategy after 2019: The battles that we win never stay won: Opinion on the future gender equality policy after 2019, old and new challenges and priorities*, Brussels.
- European Commission (2019), *2019 report on equality between women and men in the EU*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- European Commission (undated-a), *Entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)*, web page, available at https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes_sv, accessed 2 October 2019.
- European Commission (undated-b), *Female entrepreneurs*, web page, available at https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/promoting-entrepreneurship/we-work-for/women_en, accessed 27 September 2019.
- European Parliament (2013), *Women's entrepreneurship in the EU*, Library briefing, Library of the European Parliament, 30 April.
- European Parliament (2017), *Gender equality policies in Croatia – Update*, Study for the FEMM Committee, Brussels.
- Eurostat (2007), *The entrepreneurial gap between men and women*, Statistics in Focus 30/2007, Luxembourg.
- Eurostat (2019), 'Self-employed persons', 30 April.
- Fairlie, R.W. and Robb, A. M. (2009), 'Gender differences in business performance: Evidence from the characteristics of business owners survey', *Small Business Economics*, Vol. 33, pp. 375–395.
- Gompers, P. A., Mukharlyamov, V., Weisburst, E. and Xuan, Y. (2014), *Gender effects in venture capital*, Harvard Business School, Boston.
- Government of Luxembourg (2011), *L'entrepreneuriat féminin et masculin au Luxembourg*, Luxembourg.

- Grünfeld, L., Hernes, S., Idland, V., Hvide, H. and Olsøn, E. (2019), *Kvinnelig entreprenørskap i Norge: Utviklingstrekk, hindre og muligheter*, Menon Economics, Oslo.
- Gundry, L. K. and Welsch, H. P. (2001), 'The ambitious entrepreneur: High growth strategies of women-owned enterprises', *Journal of Business Venturing*, Vol. 16, No. 5, pp. 453–470.
- Haines, G. H. Jr., Orser, B. J. and Riding, A. L. (1999), 'Myths and realities: An empirical study of banks and the gender of small business clients', *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences*, Vol. 16, No. 4, pp. 291–307.
- Hannon, P. D. and Chaplin, P. (2003), 'Are incubators good for business? Understanding incubation practice – the challenge for policy', *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, Vol. 21, No. 6, pp. 861–881.
- Harrison, R. T. and Mason, C. M. (2007), 'Does gender matter? Women business angels and the supply of entrepreneurial finance', *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, Vol. 31, No. 3, pp. 445–472.
- Houses of the Oireachtas (2015), *Report on key issues for female entrepreneurs in Ireland and for their participation in the tech sector*, Irish Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Dublin.
- International Finance Corporation (IFC), (2019), *Moving toward gender balance in private equity and venture capital*, Washington, DC, US.
- Keser, J. (2014), 'Importance of women and women entrepreneurs education for new technologies: An analysis of policy documents', *Education for entrepreneurship*, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 45–58.
- Kollmann, T., Stöckmann, C., Hensellek, S. and Kensbock, J. (2016), *European Startup Monitor 2016*, German Startups Association, DuEPublico, Duisberg, Germany.
- Kollmann, T., Stöckmann, C., de Cruppe, K., Hensellek, S. and Kleine-Stegemann, L. (2018), *Female Founders Monitor*, Bundesverband Deutsche Startups E.V., Berlin.
- Kuuts, M. and Rell, M. (2015), *Uuring mitmekesisusest Eesti ettevõtetest*, Poliitikauuringute Keskus Praxis, Tallinn.
- Laja, R. (2016), 'Naised ettevõtlikes', presentation, *Eesti Naisuurimus- ja Teabekeskus (ENUT)*, 8 November 2016, Tallinn, Estonia.
- Latvijas Fakti (2017), *Sieviete uzņēmējdarbībā. Kvantitatīvais pētījums*, web page, available at https://www.lidere.lv/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Sieviete_uz%C5%86%C4%93m%C4%93jdarb%C4%ABb%C4%81-2017_LatvijasFakti.pdf, accessed 25 October 2019.
- Lee, S. S. and Denslow, D. (2005), 'A study on the major problems of U.S. women-owned small businesses', *Journal of Small Business Strategy*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 77–90.
- Malmström, M., Johansson, J. and Wincent, J. (2017), 'Gender stereotypes and venture support decisions: How governmental venture capitalists socially construct entrepreneurs' potential', *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, Vol. 5, No. 41, pp. 833–860.
- Mandl, I. and Patrini, V. (eds.) (2017), *European born globals: Job creation in young international businesses*, 1st Edition, Routledge, London.
- Mason, C. (2016), 'Researching business angels: Definitional and data challenges', Landström, H. and Mason C. (eds.), *Handbook on research on venture capital. Volume 3: Business angels*, Cheltenham, UK, pp. 25–52.
- Mason, C. M. and Harrison, R. T. (2008), 'Measuring business angel investment activity in the United Kingdom: A review of potential data sources', *Venture Capital: An International Journal of Entrepreneurial Finance*, Vol. 10, No. 4, pp. 309–330.
- Misiak, S. (2015), 'Dotacje unijne jako uwarunkowanie rozwoju samozatrudnienia kobiet w Polsce', *Handel Wewnętrzny*, Vol. 3, No. 356, pp. 164–173.
- Nearchou-Ellinas, L. and Kountouris, I. S. (2004), 'Women entrepreneurs in Cyprus: A new dynamic in Cyprus economy', *Women in Management Review*, Vol. 19, No. 6, pp. 325–332.
- OECD (2008a), *Defining entrepreneurial activity: Definitions supporting frameworks for data collection*, OECD Statistics Working Paper, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- OECD (2008b), *Gender and sustainable development: Maximising the economic, social and environmental role of women*, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- OECD (2012a), *Closing the gender gap: Act now*, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- OECD (2012b), *Looking to 2060: A global vision of long-term growth*, OECD Economics Department Policy Note, No. 15, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- OECD (2016a), *Supporting women entrepreneurs in Ireland*, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- OECD (2016b), *Entrepreneurship at a glance 2016*, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- OECD (2017a), *Entrepreneurship at a glance 2017*, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- OECD (2017b), *Inclusive entrepreneurship policies: Country assessment notes: Slovak Republic, 2017*, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- OECD (2017c), *2013 Recommendation of the Council on gender equality in education, employment and entrepreneurship*, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- PitchBook (2017), *Female-founded, VC-funded: The numbers behind venture investment in women [datagraphic]*, web page, accessed 25 November 2019.
- PitchBook (2017), *Female-founded, VC-funded: Data sourced from the PitchBook platform*.
- Rahman, A., Rozsa, Z., Kozubikova, L. and Cepel, M. (2017), 'Determinants of loan maturity in small business lending', *Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 104–118.
- Robb, A. M. (2002), 'Entrepreneurial performance by women and minorities: The case of new firms', *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 7, No. 4, pp. 383–397.

Rock, D. and Grant, H., *Harvard Business Review* (2016), 'Why diverse teams are smarter', November 4.

Schacht, M. (2018), 'Venturekapital overser kvinderne', *Bootstrapping*, 12 March.

Siilmand, A. (2018), *Naisettevõtlust mõjutavad tegurid Eestis*, Bachelor's thesis, University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia.

Skovhus, C., *Berlinske Business* (2017), '30 superiværksættere kunne ikke finde en kvinde', 5 September.

Stam, E. and Bosma, N. (2015), 'Local policies for high-growth firms', in Audretsch, D. B., Link, A. N. and Walshok, M. (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of local competitiveness*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 286–305.

Startups (undated), *What is a start-up?* web page, available at <https://startups.co.uk/what-is-a-startup/>, accessed 15 October 2019.

Stengel, G. (2015), *Stand out in the crowd: How women (and men) benefit from equity crowdfunding*, Ventureneur, New York.

Teignier, M. and Cuberes, D. (2014), *Aggregate costs of gender gaps in the labour market: A quantitative estimate*, UB Economics Working Papers 2014/308, Col·lecció d'Economia E14/308, University of Barcelona, Spain.

Verheul, I. and Thurik, R. (2001), 'Start-up capital: Does gender matter?', *Small Business Economics*, Vol. 16, No. 4, pp. 329–345.

Watson, J. (2003), 'Failure rates for female-controlled businesses: Are they any different?' *Journal of Small Business Management*, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp. 262–277.

Zarya, V., *Fortune* (2017), 'Venture capital's funding gender gap is actually getting worse', 13 March.

Zarya, V., *Fortune* (2018), 'Female founders got 2% of venture capital dollars in 2017', 31 January.

Annex 1: List of contributors

Network of Eurofound Correspondents

Country	Contributor(s)	Affiliation
Austria	Bernadette Allinger	FORBA
Belgium	Miet Lamberts	Katholieke Universiteit (KU) Leuven
Bulgaria	Violeta Ivanova	Institute for Social and Trade Union Research (ISTUR)
Croatia	Predrag Bejaković and Irena Klemenčič	Institute of Public Finance
Cyprus	Loucas Antoniou	Cyprus Labour Institute (INEK-PEO)
Czechia	Sona Veverkova	Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs (VUPSV)
Denmark	Anders Randrup	Oxford Research
Estonia	Ingel Kadarik	Praxis Centre for Policy Studies
Finland	Rasmus Firon	Oxford Research AB
France	Frédéric Turlan	IR Share
Germany	Marc Breitenbroich and Sandra Vogel	German Economic Institute (IW)
Greece	Elena Kousta	Labour Institute of the General Confederation of Greek Workers (INE-GSEE)
Ireland	Andy Prendergast	IRN Publishing
Italy	Roberto Pedersini	University of Milan
Hungary	Nora Krokovay	Kopint-Tárki Institute for Economic Research
Latvia	Raita Karnite	EPC Ltd
Lithuania	Inga Blaziene	Labour Market Research Institute (DRTI)
Luxembourg	Franz Clément	Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER)
Malta	Manwel Debono	University of Malta (UoM)
Netherlands	Amber van der Graaf	Panteia B.V.
Norway	Johannes Oldervoll	Fafo Research Foundation
Poland	Marta Trawinska	Institute of Public Affairs (ISP)
Portugal	Paula Carrilho and Heloísa Perista	Centre for Studies for Social Intervention (CESIS)
Romania	Valentina Vasile and Simona Ghita	European Institute of Romania (EIR)
Slovakia	Ludovit Cziria	Institute for Labour and Family Research (IVPR)
Slovenia	Aleksandra Kanjuo Mrčela	Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana
Sweden	Sirin Celik	Oxford Research AB
Spain	Oscar Molina	Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB)
UK	Claire Evans	University of Warwick

Annex 2: Glossary of terms

Angel investor/business angel: A high-net-worth individual, acting alone or in a formal or informal syndicate, who invests his or her own money directly in an unquoted business in which there is no family connection and who, after making the investment, generally takes an active involvement in the business, for example, as an advisor or member of the board of directors (Mason, 2016; Mason and Harrison, 2008).

Crowdfunding: An alternative form of financing where businesses reach out to members of the public and the wider community, who donate funds online to projects they choose (Startups, undated).

Gender lens investing: The term is used in different ways to refer to a way to (intentionally) direct capital towards gender equality or make capital accessible to women. The Wharton School's Project Sage included all aspects of gender lens investing: 'gender lens investing is the deliberate incorporation of gender factors into investment analysis and decisions. It is also the deliberate use of capital to improve the lives of women and girls and/or to get capital to companies, funds, and investment vehicles with a focus on women throughout value chains, products and services, or leadership' (Biegel et al, 2017, p. 3).

General partners: These include venture capital, growth equity, buyout, real estate and infrastructure private equity firms (IFC, 2019, p. 22).

Limited partners: These include sovereign wealth funds, pension funds, multilateral development banks, funds of funds, development finance institutions (IFC, 2019, p. 22).

Incubators/accelerators: There is no agreement on the definition of incubators in the literature, but some scholars (Hannon and Chaplin, 2003) refer to their characteristics, such as shared services, space, business support services, supporting environment.

Business incubators are support structures that support entrepreneurs in business creation and development. The broad objective of a business incubator is to create and develop firms and improve their chances for success (Bruneel et al, 2012).

Business accelerators (BAPs) have some similarities with business incubators, but BAPs 'have a more explicit focus on accelerating the growth of firms. There are two types of BAPs, virtual and location-based BAPs. Virtual BAPs most often target gazelles that want to make the transition toward high-growth firms, while location-based BAPs most often target ambitious entrepreneurs that aim to develop their (nascent) business into a gazelle' (Stam and Bosma, 2015).

Start-up: There is no agreed definition of a start-up. According to the OECD (2016a), start-ups are enterprises that are up to two years old. In the *European Startup Monitor*, start-ups are defined by three characteristics. They must be younger than 10 years, feature (highly) innovative technologies and/or business models, and have or strive for significant employee and/or sales growth (Kollmann et al, 2016, p. 5). On the other hand, the multidisciplinary scientific journal *Nature* defines a start-up as 'a small company in its first few years of business that aims to solve a problem for customers with its products or services' (Dance, 2019).

Venture capital: Definitions differ across continents and times. 'Venture capital (VC) refers to investments provided to early-stage, innovative, and high-growth start-up companies. ... Private equity typically includes investments in venture capital or growth investment, as well as late-stage, mezzanine, turnaround (distressed), and buyout investments' (Cumming, 2012). 'Venture capital investment consists in the purchase of shares of young, privately held companies by outsiders for the primary purpose of capital gain' (Cressy, 2008).

Annex 3: Coding system used

To allow for analysis on the role of gender in investment decisions made by private funds, a coding system was applied. National correspondents were asked to use the

codes set out in the table below for each identified private fund with a gender lens investing approach.

Table A3.1: Coding system for role of gender in investment decisions by private funds

Coding	Description	Example
Quantified Gender Mandate (QGM)	Investment based on specific female metrics	50/50 gender balance of founders, large percentage of female founding members or no less than a certain percentage of female founding members
Gender Mandate (GM)	Investment based on publicly stated criteria on gender	Ensuring that founding members include women
Gender Consideration (GC)	Investment based on gender considerations	Some of the founding members are female

Source: Adapted from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania's Social Impact Initiative, Project Sage (Biegel et al, 2017)

Annex 4: Private funds and female entrepreneurs interviewed

Table A4.1: Private funds with a gender lens investment approach

Country	Name of fund
Belgium	We Are Jane
Czechia	Espira Investments
Netherlands	Karmijn Kapitaal
	TheNextWoman Fund
Poland	Black Swan Fund
Spain	RED Ventures Fund I
	Santander Equality Acciones, FI
	Women Angels for STEAM
Sweden	Indecap Q30
UK	AllBright
	Angel Academe

Table A4.2: Private funds interviewed for the purpose of the study

Country	Name of company	Interviewee
Netherlands	Karmijn Kapitaal	Anne Nijenhuis, Investment Manager
Sweden	Indecap Q30	Elena Herrero, Manager
UK	Angel Academe	Simon Hopkins, Co-Founder

Table A4.3: Female entrepreneurs interviewed for the purpose of the study

Country	Name of company	Interviewee
Netherlands	Mantelaar	Barbara Groeneveld, Co-Founder
Sweden	Eatit	Theresia Silander Haström, Founder
Sweden	Friendbase	Deborah Lygonis, Founder
UK	Doppel	Fotini Markopoulou, CEO

Getting in touch with the EU

In person

All over the European Union there are hundreds of Europe Direct information centres. You can find the address of the centre nearest you at: <http://europa.eu/contact>

On the phone or by email

Europe Direct is a service that answers your questions about the European Union. You can contact this service:

- by freephone: 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (certain operators may charge for these calls),
- at the following standard number: +32 22999696 or
- by email via: <http://europa.eu/contact>

Finding information about the EU

Online

Information about the European Union in all the official languages of the EU is available on the Europa website at: <http://europa.eu>

EU publications

You can download or order free and priced EU publications from EU Bookshop at: <http://publications.europa.eu/eubookshop>. Multiple copies of free publications may be obtained by contacting Europe Direct or your local information centre (see <http://europa.eu/contact>).

EU law and related documents

For access to legal information from the EU, including all EU law since 1951 in all the official language versions, go to EUR-Lex at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu>

Open data from the EU

The EU Open Data Portal (<http://data.europa.eu/euodp>) provides access to datasets from the EU. Data can be downloaded and reused for free, both for commercial and non-commercial purposes.

Female entrepreneurs represent just a small proportion of the total number of entrepreneurs in the European Union today. Some of the hurdles facing female entrepreneurs – or would-be entrepreneurs – are related to getting adequate funding, access to the right networks, and finding the right information and advice. In the last few years, some private funds have realised that female founders are not always well served and there is a market gap when it comes to investing in women-led enterprises. This report examines the use of private funds to invest in female entrepreneurs in the European Union and Norway. In addition, it investigates the prevalence of public finance tools and public support schemes that effectively remove barriers and enable women to become competent entrepreneurs.

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) is a tripartite European Union Agency established in 1975. Its role is to provide knowledge in the area of social, employment and work-related policies according to Regulation (EU) 2019/127.