

Preface by the OECD

The Missing Entrepreneurs 2023 arrives at a time of continued volatility and uncertainty in the global economy, characterised by immediate and pressing challenges such as trade disruptions and slow growth in many of the world's largest economies. These complicate the ability to overcome challenges and leverage opportunities from longer-term pressures, notably climate and demographic change as well as the digital transition. Whether immediate or longer-term, entrepreneurs, as important sources of growth, jobs and innovation, have a central role to play in finding solutions to these challenges, but not all those with entrepreneurial aspirations have the opportunity to turn their ideas into businesses.

This new edition of the Missing Entrepreneurs shows that there are still more than 34 million “missing” entrepreneurs across the OECD area. Of these, about three-quarters are women. Although governments have been working to boost women's entrepreneurship for decades progress remains too slow and renewed momentum is needed to get more women into the entrepreneurship pipeline, and, in turn, unleash new ideas, innovation, jobs and growth.

However, progress is being made in many OECD countries and in many others, efforts to strengthen momentum via new strategies and action plans to boost diversity in entrepreneurship, especially among women and older people, are well under way. In addition, many governments are using inclusive entrepreneurship schemes to address pressing needs such as helping Ukrainian refugees integrate into their new communities as entrepreneurs.

The OECD is working with governments to go even further. In 2022, the OECD Council at Ministerial level issued two recommendations that call on governments to reduce gaps in entrepreneurship, namely the Recommendations on SME and Entrepreneurship Policy and on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People. These were given further impetus in the Declaration by Ministers that followed the OECD SME and Entrepreneurship Ministerial Meeting in June 2023.

Our work here is the fruit of a long-standing and successful partnership with the European Commission to strengthen inclusive entrepreneurship policies, which together with our work on missing entrepreneurs includes many other activities. For example the OECD-EU Youth Entrepreneurship Policy Academy is working to strengthen youth entrepreneurship policies. I would like to extend a warm thank you to the European Commission for supporting this work, which has proven instrumental in allowing us to strengthen the evidence base on, and design and implementation of, effective inclusive entrepreneurship policies and programmes.



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