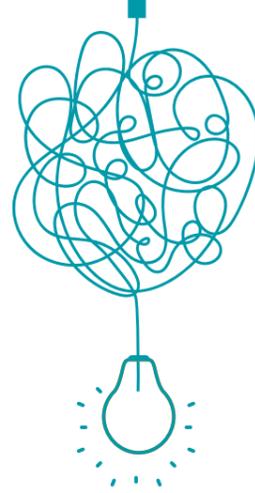


# Youth Business Europe Programme - Impact Report

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Citi Foundation





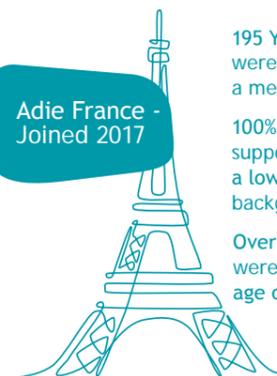
# 1. Executive Summary

## About the programme

The five-year-long Youth Business Europe (YBE) programme (2015 - 2020) was an ambitious partnership between Youth Business International (YBI) and Citi Foundation, designed to tackle the prevalent problem of youth unemployment in Europe.

When young people become entrepreneurs, they unlock income generation, job creation and economic growth. Yet for too many young people, starting a business feels out of reach, exclusive and unavailable to them.

The programme was designed to support young entrepreneurs, with a focus on disadvantaged young people, in 10 countries to start or strengthen a business through training, networking, mentorship, and in some cases, financial assistance, drawing on the expertise of YBI and with the backing of Citi Foundation.



**Adie France - Joined 2017**

- 195 Young people were paired with a mentor
- 100% of those supported had a low income background
- Over half (55%) were under the age of 25



## Key highlights

- Programme reach:**  
 The YBI-Citi Foundation partnership supported more than 38,000 young entrepreneurs to overcome barriers, leading to over 11,000 businesses started or strengthened. Over 3,000 young people have received specialised support through business mentoring and over 8,000 additional jobs have been created helping further drive inclusive economic growth. Additionally, young entrepreneurs have been helped to build the skills, confidence and connections they need to beat the odds and become successful business owners, with many reporting not only increased skills and confidence but also a clearer vision for their business and improved professional networks.
- Innovation and digital:**  
 The support of Citi Foundation spurred new, expanded and innovative approaches, such as digitising work materials and creating new online platforms, to reaching wider and more inclusive groups of young people and addressing their challenges in setting up business. This includes the launch of new training in Ireland, as well as new mentoring programmes in Germany and France, which substantially increased the reach and quality of support for young people. The investment in these new approaches has resulted in long-term changes as in most cases they have become embedded in the core support offering of the member organisations.
- Reaching disadvantaged groups:**  
 The programme focussed on engaging youth populations that had been harder to reach or faced particular challenges. Members in Italy, Sweden and France, for example, were able to support the most disadvantaged groups by expanding their programmes in less economically developed regions with higher rates of youth unemployment. Throughout the programme, across the countries involved, there was at different stages a shared focus on reaching young migrants and, most recently, young female entrepreneurs, culminating in the Young Female Entrepreneur of the Year Europe Award in October 2020, celebrating female entrepreneurs supported through the programme.
- Network effect:**  
 A concerted focus on building a collaborative community across the participating members - 11 by the last 18 months of the programme - led to country level programme improvements through sharing best practice, and structured approaches to learning in relation to young migrants and women entrepreneurs. This collaboration has triggered joint activity outside the remit of this programme, including the creation of a regional network for migrant entrepreneurs (M-UP) through the European Union's COSME Programme and, more recently, Europe wide work to rapidly respond to the support needs of young entrepreneurs affected by the COVID-19 economic crisis.

### MicroStart Belgium - Joined 2017

3,194 young people supported through the programme  
 80% from low income background  
 837 young people mentored





## 2. Youth unemployment in Europe

## 2. Youth unemployment in Europe

### A crisis for young people

Youth unemployment in Europe has been a prevalent issue for some years, with numbers increasing starkly since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic as young people, particularly those who are from disadvantaged backgrounds, being the hardest hit.

In 2015, when the programme began, youth unemployment averaged 20% across Europe's 28 countries<sup>1</sup>.

As of November 2020, unemployment among those under 25 in the EU averages 17.7% - an increase of 2.8% on the year previous and more than double the unemployment rate of the general population, which stands at 7.5%. The highest youth unemployment rates have been recorded in Spain (40.9% in November 2020), Italy (29.5%), Lithuania (28.4%) and Sweden (24.4%)<sup>2</sup>. Young people often find themselves in an experience trap: employers require experienced and skilled workers, which places young people at the back of the queue. This then means that young people can't gain the experience they need, and the longer this continues the less attractive they become to employers and the harder it gets for them to find a job. They're stuck in a vicious cycle.

To compound the issue, young people are more likely to be affected by in-work poverty. According to Eurostat, in 2017 the proportion of

young people aged 18-24 in work and at risk of poverty in the European Union (EU) was estimated to be 11%, compared to 9.4% for the overall population<sup>3</sup>.

Addressing youth unemployment in Europe is imperative, not only for the wellbeing of young people but also to ensure sustainable, inclusive growth and global social cohesion.

#### Entrepreneurship as a solution

Entrepreneurship has consistently shown itself to be a viable pathway for young people looking to secure decent employment - nearly half of all young people aged 15-34 consider a career as an entrepreneur to be desirable, while 41% consider it feasible<sup>4</sup>.

Young people equipped with the skills confidence and connections they need to beat the odds and become successful business owners create decent work and drive inclusive economic growth, whilst transforming livelihoods and strengthening communities. Young entrepreneurs have the power to shape the future, working to solve some of the greatest challenges of our time, and creating opportunities - not just for themselves but for us all.



<sup>1</sup> eurostat, December 2015: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7091248/3-01122015-AP-EN.pdf/772e30b0-2308-45ab-a712-6b3039b632bb>

<sup>2</sup> eurostat, February 2020: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Unemployment\\_statistics#Youth\\_unemployment](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Unemployment_statistics#Youth_unemployment)

<sup>3</sup> eurostat, January 2019: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20190122-1?inheritRedirect=true>

<sup>4</sup> Eurofound, 2015: [https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef\\_publication/field\\_ef\\_document/ef1507en.pdf](https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1507en.pdf)

## Young Female Entrepreneur of the Year Europe Award

YBI and Citi Foundation's Young Female Entrepreneur of the Year Award 2020 intended to celebrate the 11 finalists and member organisations from across the YBE group, showcasing the impact of the Youth Business Europe programme and the difference it has made to female entrepreneurs.

The event highlighted the structural barriers and levers of change for women to set up businesses, and emphasised the importance of role models, support networks, and programmes like YBE to empower women to become entrepreneurs and encourage more young women and girls to consider it as a viable career option. Films and creative assets brought the story to life and helped drive the digital and social media campaign

241 attendees joined the online event with speakers including representatives from Citi Foundation, YBI, The Social Investment Consultancy and The Dots.

The 11 finalists run a range of businesses including in the educational, environmental and digital sectors.

Mariia Plotkina, founder of Geek Teachers, in Russia, which offers online courses and digitally-based festivals to support teachers to access technology and conduct lessons in a new way was awarded the Female Entrepreneur of the Year: Europe Award 2020 and received \$5,000 USD from Citi Foundation and business coaching to support the ongoing development of her enterprise. Giulia Pettinau, Founder of Orangogo, an online search engine for sports in Italy, placed first runner-up. Mathilde Cortinovis, Founder of the eco-responsible Équilibres Café in France placed second runner-up.

Both runners-up also received business coaching and six of the 11 finalists have taken up the prize of receiving legal support for their businesses from YBI partner Hogan Lovells, alongside in-house counsel from Hogan Lovells' own clients, including PayPal. This includes attending a legal workshop and having an assessment of their business legal needs, plus up to 20 hours of legal advice per Finalist.



Maria Plotkina



Giulia Pettinau



Mathilde Cortinovis

### Addressing diversity

Like all populations, young people are a diverse demographic, and this presents its own employment challenges. Historically, young women in Europe have been more affected by unemployment than young men due to the barriers that come with entrenched stereotypes and negative social norms. This not only limits women's ability to fulfil their potential, but also often restricts access to assets, training and services. According to eurostat, the EU employment rate for men of working age was 78.3% in 2018, exceeding that of women (66.5 %) by 11.8 percentage points<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, women make up 52 % of the total European population but only 34.4 % of the European Union (EU) self-employed and 30 % of start-up entrepreneurs<sup>6</sup>. In the final year of the partnership, the Young Female Entrepreneur of the Year Europe Award shone a spotlight on both these challenges and the achievements of successful female entrepreneurs.

Race and ethnicity also highlights further inequalities - between 2009 and 2017, more than \$424 billion USD in total tech venture capital was raised - but only 0.0006% of it went to startups led by black women<sup>7</sup>.

Meanwhile, young migrant workers are also more likely to face unemployment. According to eurostat, in 2018 the youth unemployment rate for native-born populations was 14.6% across EU-28, and 16.2% for those born elsewhere in the EU. For those born outside of the EU it was 23.5%<sup>8</sup>.

These are amongst the challenges that YBI is seeking to address in promoting and supporting truly inclusive youth entrepreneurship.

<sup>5</sup> eurostat, February 2020: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Gender\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Gender_statistics)

<sup>6</sup> EU stats (Women Entrepreneurs, 2012 : [https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/supporting-entrepreneurship/women-entrepreneurs\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/supporting-entrepreneurship/women-entrepreneurs_en)

<sup>7</sup> Project Diane Report 2018 : <https://www.projectdiane.com/>

<sup>8</sup> eurostat, May 2019: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migrant\\_integration\\_statistics\\_%E2%80%93\\_labour\\_market\\_indicators#Youth\\_unemployment](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migrant_integration_statistics_%E2%80%93_labour_market_indicators#Youth_unemployment)



*“One of the prizes was business coaching and that has been invaluable to me”*

*“Before the programme, our business couldn’t really be called a business - we had no plan and no understanding about how to make decisions inside our team. Having a mentor through the programme helped us to develop the team and identify clear roles. It has really helped us to develop the business”.*

*“Winning the YFEY Award has helped me to appreciate that there really is a need for our start up, not only in Russia but globally. It has given my co-founder and I the confidence, encouragement and motivation to continue doing what we do. One of the prizes was business coaching and that has been invaluable to me; giving me a clear understanding of what we need to do right now in the business and how to quickly increase our sales”.*

*“Winning has opened up doors, enabling me to meet and communicate with people in the business world who have been able to help and boost the business; an opportunity that I would not have had otherwise. In summary, it has given me and my business encouragement, new contacts, a boost of energy and a lot of happiness. It’s hard to make something great if you don’t feel supported and this Award has been all about positive encouragement and has been of huge value to me, thank you”.*



Youth Business Russia And Impact Hub Moscow Russia - Joined 2019

60% women  
70% from low income background



Nyföretagar Centrum Sweden - Joined 2015

40% under 25  
3,850 jobs created  
4,572 businesses supported



MOST, Kazakhstan - Joined 2019

162 people supported through the programme



Mariia Plotkina (Winner of the Young Female Entrepreneur of the Year Europe Award 2020)

Supported by Youth Business Europe Member Youth Business Russia alongside Impact Hub Moscow.

Established Geek Teachers, offering online courses and digital festivals for teachers

Former Computer Science teacher Mariia set up Geek Teachers in 2018, offering online courses and digitally-based festivals to support teachers to access technology and conduct lessons in a new way. Today, Geek Teachers has provided support to over 12,000 people through online courses and now employs 15 people. Its social networks have grown from 100 to 15,000 and they have run Masterclasses in 12 cities across Russia. Mariia’s 10-year aim for Geek Teachers is for at least one teacher in every school in Russia to know about and champion Geek Teachers.

**In October 2020, Mariia won YBI and Citi Foundation’s Young Female Entrepreneur of the Year Europe Award.**



### 3. Overview of the programme

# 3. Overview of the programme

Citi Foundation and YBI first joined forces in 2015, kicking off a five-year programme that aimed to contribute to tackling the challenges of high youth unemployment and underemployment throughout Europe through youth-led businesses. In total, the programme supported over 38,000 young people across 10 countries in starting, sustaining and growing a business.

The programme had three phases, each building on the learning of previous work. For the first two years, between 2015 and 2017, the initiative explored ways and means of expanding youth economic opportunities through entrepreneurship. The programme was implemented in collaboration with six YBI members: KIZ (Germany), Positive Planet (France), MicroLab (Italy), Qredits (Netherlands), NyföretagarCentrum (Sweden) and Youth Business Spain.

During the second phase, between 2017 and 2019, the partnership was extended to include three additional members: microStart (Belgium), Adie (France) and ICE (Ireland). Here, members were able to share best practice, knowledge and methodologies, and in doing so were able to support even more young people to develop their employability and entrepreneurship skills, create jobs and drive sustainable economic development in cities across Europe.

In 2019, YBI and Citi Foundation renewed their partnership to support low-income young entrepreneurs across Europe to the end of 2020. Two new members from Russia (Youth Business Russia, with support from ImpactHub Moscow) and Kazakhstan (MOST Incubator) also joined the programme. The final phase aimed to leverage the vibrant network built over the years with a deepened focus on young women entrepreneurs and the particular barriers they face when it comes to starting and sustaining their own businesses. Women entrepreneurs were profiled as successful role models throughout the programme and their success was celebrated with the Young Female Entrepreneur of the Year Europe Award, in a bid to inspire more women to start their own businesses.



Over the five years, the programme was delivered in three component parts:

### 1. Country specific projects

These addressed context-specific needs through the support of entrepreneurship training, mentoring and other services for young entrepreneurs in the 10 countries.

### 2. Regional learning, knowledge and innovation

The YBE programme was created through a collaborative approach involving a series of regional workshops that focused on designing, implementing and exchanging new and innovative solutions to supporting young entrepreneurs. This involved providing entrepreneurship support to younger people, connecting young entrepreneurs with one another, and developing volunteering opportunities for Citi employees.

### 3. Communicating and maximising the value of the partnership

The partnership and programme was promoted by a website, social media campaigns, case studies and a Europe-wide YBE event. Citi employees also played an integral role in spreading the YBE message by leveraging additional communication opportunities within the company.

The programme supported over 38,000 young people across 10 countries in starting, sustaining and growing a business.



Qredits Netherlands - Joined 2015



6,172 young people supported through the programme

86% under 25

19 Citi employees engaged





## 4. Programme achievements

# 4. Programme achievements

The Youth Business Europe programme yielded positive results for all parties involved. Young entrepreneurs gained the support they needed to start and strengthen their businesses, YBI members were able to expand their offerings and forge valuable new connections, and Citi employees reported multiple benefits from their involvement in the initiative.

## Country specific projects

With the support of the YBE programme, the 11 members were able to set up new training and mentoring plans; improve, expand and digitalise their existing offers; and scale their programmes to new geographical areas and demographic groups.

The YBE programme exceeded all targets.

## Outcomes at entrepreneur level

### Increased skills and confidence

Members report that without the YBE programme the number of businesses created by young people would be substantially lower. People from younger and disadvantaged demographics often have very strong ideas, yet for too many young people, starting a business feels out of reach, exclusive and unavailable to them.

The YBE programme provided training and guidance - and in some cases start-up finance - to remove these initial barriers and give young people the support to start their entrepreneurial journey.



Case study: Mohamed Alshartash

Supported by Youth Business Europe Member microStart in Belgium

Established catering company, Damasco Cocina



"I arrived in Belgium as a Syrian refugee in 2014. After learning Dutch, I was supported by microStart in passing the exams necessary to start a business in Belgium. It had always been my dream to connect cultures through food.

Through microStart I was matched with a business mentor and specialist advisor who also had a migrant background, and spoke Arabic fluently which was really helpful. In May 2019, with a partly interest-free loan from microStart, I was able to launch my own catering company and within just four months had catered major events for clients such as Citi House and Levi Strauss.

microStart have been a huge help to me, not only for providing a mentor to help me to make sense of the market and complex business regulations, but also for the start-up finance that I would have struggled to obtain through conventional channels".



## Broader business vision, improved professional networks and skills for business growth

The YBE programme supported young entrepreneurs who already had trading businesses to develop ideas and build their skills for expansion. Through training and mentoring by YBI members, young people were able to establish important connections and gain valuable advice, as well as benefit from peer support. Participants and alumni created new products together and started joint ventures, thereby tapping into additional markets and jointly growing their businesses. The peer-networking spaces were also used by members to gather feedback to continuously improve their support services.

Case study: Christina Plaka

Supported by Youth Business Europe Member KIZ in Germany

Established Germany's first Manga drawing school, I am Mangaka!

"My friend recommended KIZ to me shortly after I'd opened Germany's first Manga drawing school. With the help of mentoring and coaching I have been able to expand my business quickly; renting additional office space, employing former students as teachers and outsourcing my social media marketing to a fellow YBE participant.

Besides the networking opportunities and business skills that KIZ offered me, the most important and precious thing I got out of the programme was the one year mentorship with my mentor.

I now have 65 permanent students, a growing waiting list and big plans for the future, including expanding to further branches and the development of a line of merchandise".



## Outcomes at YBI member level

The YBE programme provided YBI members with a valuable learning experience from which to grow, develop and celebrate their existing programmes, as well as develop new models.

### Scaled programmes and expanded reach

Through the programme, four members focused on rolling out new training and/or mentoring programmes developed during the first phase of the YBI-Citi Foundation partnership to additional regions or new groups. Some members, such as those in Italy, Sweden and France reported a wider scope for their programmes, often throughout less economically developed regions with higher rates of youth unemployment. This meant that opportunities were reaching the most disadvantaged groups and shows the longer term impact of the programme.

#### Case study: MicroLab - Italy

During the second phase of the YBE programme, Italy's YBI member MicroLab delivered 'Up to Youth' training for aspiring young entrepreneurs under the age of 35. During its operations, the initiative expanded its scope considerably to include regions in the south of Italy, where unemployment rates are particularly high.

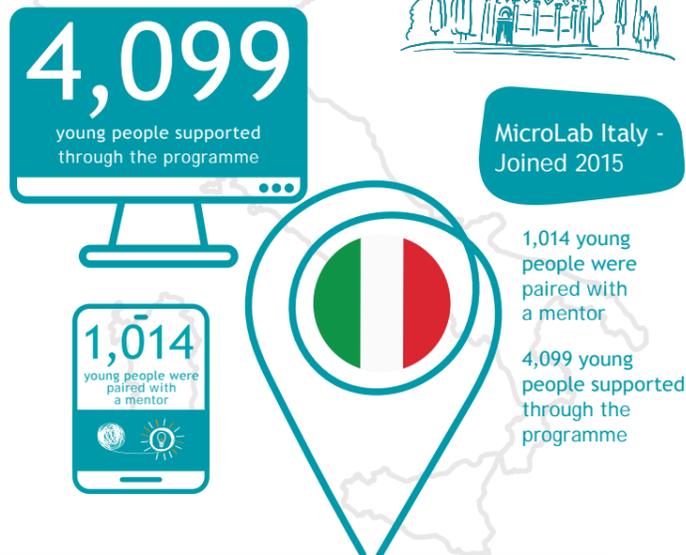
The programme was able to establish a new office, recruit additional mentors and reach large numbers of participants in the new territory, thereby discovering untapped entrepreneurial creativity and potential. Between August 2017 and July 2019, MicroLab supported a total of 1,642 young people, 41% of which were female. Following their participation in the programmes, these young people created 181 businesses and strengthened a further 128 businesses, leading to the creation of 289 jobs.

MicroLab found that its links with other YBI members, such as NyföretagarCentrum in Sweden and MicroStart in Belgium, were particularly helpful in achieving this growth. "Before working in partnership with Citi Foundation, we were a smaller organisation without any European connections," says MicroLab National Co-ordinator, Stefania Guida.

"If you are part of a network and you are supported by a foundation like Citi's, you can see that certain challenges also happen in other countries with completely different contexts. You notice that you are not alone. We can open our minds and create new solutions together. This helps us to grow."

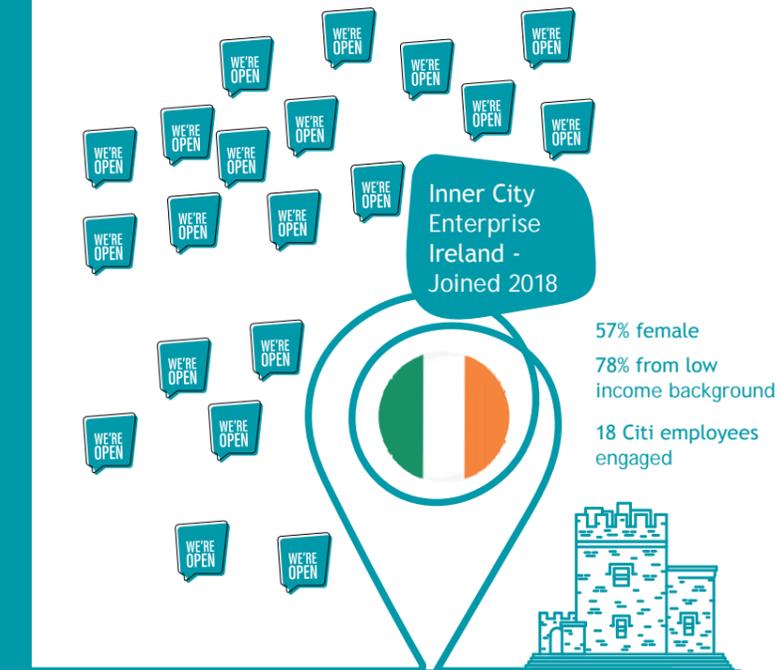
### Improved programme quality

Many members highlighted that Citi Foundation's support gave them the scope to improve, develop or expand their programmes. In the end, all 11 members were able to improve their services to young entrepreneurs. Examples included developing more appropriate training and marketing tools due to an improved understanding of specific target group needs, programme streamlining, updating and digitalising work materials, creating new platforms to connect volunteers, and providing follow-up support after business creation.



#### Case study: Inner City Enterprise - Ireland

With the support of Citi Foundation, Ireland based Inner City Enterprise (ICE) - an established organisation with a successful track record of supporting entrepreneurs into business - was able to expand its reach by designing and implementing an entirely new youth entrepreneurship training programme. Tapping into youth entrepreneurial talent, the programme supported young people to develop their businesses and increase their livelihoods. In the first year alone, the programme was successfully rolled out three times, benefitting a total of 105 participants with 20 new businesses already created. Furthermore, the organisation was also able to streamline its mentoring offer and develop it into a structured programme, which meant it was able to expand its target group and establish important new corporate partnerships.



"The YBI/Citi partnership has been an amazing opportunity for ICE to diversify our service offering by enabling us to develop a youth centred enterprise training programme," says ICE Enterprise Development Manager Shane Meehan. "It has assisted in raising our profile, offered huge support in the area of mentoring and helped us think outside the box and create new promising streams of engagement."

### New support models

As well as scaling and improving their existing services, all 11 members developed new models and approaches to fostering youth entrepreneurship. This included the launch of new training in Ireland, as well as new mentoring programmes in Ireland, Germany and France, thus substantially increasing the reach and quality of support for young people in those areas.

### Enhanced professional networks

The YBE programme also played a key role in creating new and strengthening existing connections with key partners. This included access to skills and expertise within Citi, which enabled members to - among other benefits - raise their profile through collaborative communication, recruit high-level juror panels and equip young entrepreneurs with important technical and financial skills. For some members, the networking benefits extended beyond Citi and the YBE group, and the partnership opened doors for valuable new collaborations with big corporates, academic institutions, finance firms, incubation spaces and the public sector.

### Improved programme sustainability

Many initiatives that first began under the Citi Foundation-YBI partnership as pilots or one-offs have evolved into permanent aspects of each member's offering. In the Netherlands, for example, Citi Foundation support enabled the upgrade of training materials, which led to the successful accreditation of a nationwide government scheme fostering entrepreneurship training in schools. The organisation not only doubled the number of young people being supported, but also acquired a new long-term sustainable funding source. Similarly, in Ireland, local government funding was obtained despite a previous rejection, as the member was able to showcase successes resulting from the Citi Foundation-YBI partnership.

"The YBE programme has been instrumental in enabling Oredits to successfully update our EigenBaas school programme. This is an online e-learning course about how to start and grow a business and there has been huge uptake in vocational colleges across the country."

Evelyne Oprel, International Relationship Manager, Oredits, Netherlands





## 5. Regional learning, knowledge and innovation: Youth Business Europe Network

# 5. Regional learning, knowledge and innovation: Youth Business Europe Network

While the YBE programme was important in improving initiatives at individual country levels, the overall partnership also meant that the 11 YBI members established valuable connections as a wider YBE group, as well as forming beneficial relationships with Citi employees.

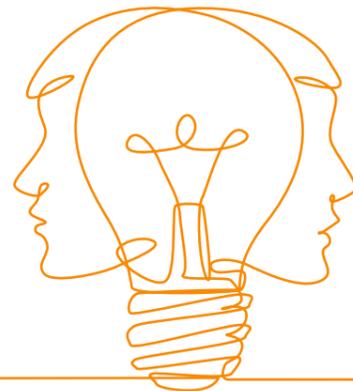
## Outcomes at ecosystem level

Over the course of the programme, participating organisations developed a positive group dynamic, which evolved into a cohesive, trust-based network. From the nine regional workshops, several field visits and virtual communication in-between, a range of bilateral and multilateral collaborations arose, helping members gain new insights, expert advice and vital learning.

More intensified in-country support between the two French members included sharing facilities and technology, signposting participants to each other, staff capacity-building, as well as joint outreach and events. On some occasions, members also built deeper collaborations for the development of specific, cross-country initiatives. From those emerged a successful bid to the European Union's COSME Programme to develop a regional network for migrant entrepreneurs (M-UP project). This project was founded by a consortium including MicroLab (Italy), Autoocupació (part of Youth Business Spain) and KIZ (Germany). Adie (France), Positive Planet (France), MicroStart (Belgium) and ICE (Ireland) then joined as members of M-UP once it was established.

As part of this wider YBE network, members reported:

- Improved fund raising capacity
- Improved organisation management
- A raised organisational profile with increased visibility and public recognition
- Improved training and mentoring programmes
- Improved reach to disadvantaged target groups
- Increased inspiration and creativity
- Increased motivation, confidence and optimism



*"Our focus has changed from quantity to quality. There was an evolution of thought. We had reached a good number of people, now we were thinking about how we can help them even better."*

David Page, Head of Operations, Positive Planet France



## Outcomes at Citi employee level

In total, 164 Citi employees supported knowledge and learning within the programme, and in a wide variety of ways, including mentoring, training and event hosting. This was beneficial to YBI members in that it helped them to improve their services to young entrepreneurs and better build their business skills. However, it also brought a number of benefits to the Citi employees involved - particularly those involved as business mentors. Citi collaborators reported:

- Feeling fulfilled in using their own skills and experience to help others achieve their dreams
- High satisfaction with both the tangibility and sustainability of their impact, especially compared to other charitable work
- A refreshing change in perspective from working with different people and sectors

- Gaining new knowledge and widening their own horizons by engaging with young people and their ideas
- Developing skills and experience in mentoring and coaching techniques

Both programme implementers and Citi staff highlighted the high value of the initiative for 'bridging worlds' and connecting people from different sectors and social groups, thereby fostering mutual learning and understanding. Citi interviewees involved in YBI initiatives described the experience as overwhelmingly positive for themselves and their colleagues - something that is reflected in repeated mentoring engagements often over several years.

The programme supported 1,451 young people

KIZ Germany -  
Joined 2015

536 young people were paired with a mentor



Nearly half (49%) came from a low income background



*"The mentoring programme is a wonderful opportunity for everybody involved. I enjoy being a sounding board for young people who put a lot of passion into their businesses and help them to develop a different perspective on topics relevant to their ventures. Furthermore, it is always a pleasure to learn about business models in areas I normally would not have access to in my daily business life."*

Sven Scheid, Director, Citi Financial Institutions Group, Germany



## 6. Learning

# 6. Learning

What did we learn?

The YBE programme was able to achieve these positive outcomes through a variety of interrelated elements and key success factors. As such, learning takeaways from the five-year programme tell us that:

### Flexibility enables creativity and ongoing improvement

Allowing members the freedom and resources to develop their services and experiment with new support models was vital in enabling them to increase programme quality - thereby developing and evolving services that responded to the changing needs of young entrepreneurs.

### Peer learning drives innovation

For members, expanding beyond their own national horizons provided new perspectives as well as new opportunities for fundraising and marketing. Many were surprised to encounter common challenges across Europe, which not only fostered a network-wide sense of teamwork and camaraderie, but also led to more focused discussions on solutions, benefiting multiple member offerings at once.

### Building relationships is crucial

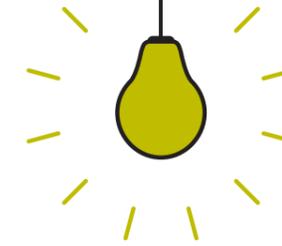
The YBE network is a diverse group with varied targets, operating models and local contexts - creating a strong, cohesive community with mutual interests took time. But it was worth it. The YBE network provided a space for members to build close relationships with one another, and share good practice and experience. Face-to-face meetings, flexibility outside the formal agenda and making time for one another helped to facilitate this. The evident importance of these relationships and trust strongly demonstrate the value of the network.



### Shared challenges yield better solutions

Reaching the most disadvantaged groups is a common objective of all members, so the existence of the regional network means that new members struggling to meet their objectives have a strong pool of support and advice to draw from.

It takes time to build a strong regional network, but as the outcomes show, it's worth it



The best innovation comes from trial and error

Meeting face-to-face is vital for fostering strong relationships

Quality is more important than quantity in terms of voluntary assistance

Flexibility is critical in ensuring good programme quality





Positive planet France -  
Joined 2015

5,404 young  
people supported  
through the  
programme

978 new jobs  
created



**Raheem Attoumane**

Supported by Youth Business Europe Member Positive Planet in France

Established the delivery service business, MajordHome Group

*"Having grown up in Marseille and then moved to Paris, I decided in my early 20s to move back to Marseille to start my own delivery service business. During the development stages, I reached out to Positive Planet who were able to provide me with support and technical assistance around developing my business idea and they helped me to create a strong business plan."*

*"With the support of Positive Planet, I now offer a 24/7 service across the whole of Marseille. As well as being an economic success, I'm keen to reach those in the most deprived areas and we provide employment opportunities to people, especially youth, coming from disadvantaged neighbourhoods."*



Youth Business Spain -  
Joined 2015



619 businesses  
supported

62% from  
low income  
background

502 new jobs  
created

**Lara Prendes Prieto Puga (Finalist in the Young Female Entrepreneur of the Year Award 2020)**

Supported by Youth Business Europe Member Youth Business Spain through sub-member F.Ronsel

Established Despensa 77, the first zero waste mini market in Galicia, Spain.

*"Having not come from a business background, the programme offered me a significant amount of business knowledge that I didn't have. It also provided me with a lot of support, confidence, an amazing entrepreneur's network and the understanding and vision of the business world. The programme has kept me on an endless learning curve and has pushed me and my business to excellence, growing day by day."*

*"Since receiving support from Youth Business Spain through their sub-member F.Ronsel, I have moved the location of my shop to a premises double the size, I've started a local delivery service, employed two permanent workers and set up a website, which will shortly start selling online."*

*"I am beyond grateful for having this opportunity. I highly recommend it to any young person new to the entrepreneurship world. Thanks so much for your work and support."*





## 7. Conclusions and what's next

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The YBE programme has had an undeniably positive impact on and long-term benefits for young entrepreneurs throughout Europe. Across the programme period, more than 38,000 young people have been equipped with the skills, networks and support needed to start and grow their businesses, leading to 8,758 new businesses started and 8,309 additional jobs created. The support not only helped young entrepreneurs but has had a positive effect on local communities and the wider economy.

The programme has been remarkably successful in expanding its reach to include young entrepreneurs from disadvantaged communities, where access to training opportunities is low and youth unemployment rates are high. The partnership initially focused specifically on supporting young migrant entrepreneurs, with a focus on young women entrepreneurs in its final phase. However, the benefits of the programme extend far beyond individual projects: the creation of a cohesive, trust-based regional network has contributed to the wider organisational sustainability of all YBI members.

The knowledge, skills, good practice and learning shared within the YBE group helped to catalyse programme expansions and improvements at country level, which in turn benefitted young entrepreneurs. The strong collaborative network built through this five-year programme provides a significant platform for future collaboration across Europe to continue to innovate, reach growing numbers of disadvantaged young entrepreneurs, and create greater positive impact for young people.

*"Seeing the solutions of others helps us to reflect about our own solutions. You notice that you are not alone, and that we are doing a good job, even if we are struggling sometimes. We can open our mind, share learning and create new solutions together. This is helpful and sometimes challenging, and it helps us to grow."* Stefania Guida, National Coordinator, MicroLab, Italy

Across the programme period, more than 38,000 young people have been equipped with the skills, networks and support needed to start and grow their businesses, leading to 11,000 started or strengthened and 8,309 jobs created.



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