Collaborative Changemaking to advance an EACH world:

# The Hello Europe Ecosystem Accelerator Model

HELLO EUROPE an initiative by: ASHOKA & ASHOKA EUROPE COMMUNITY

# Table of Contents

## About this Toolkit

In 2022 Hello Europe piloted its first Ecosystem Accelerator, a process that applies social innovation accelerator strategies to a given "ecosystem" (i.e., the actors and institutions involved in a topic or sector) in the field of migration. The methodology of the Accelerator was based on two focus points: 1- Hello Europe's engagement with more than 14 accelerators launched throughout Europe, their extensive network within the sector, and their Policy Salons, which convene numerous social entrepreneurs, key stakeholders, and EU policymakers, and 2- the learnings and knowledge harvested by Europe One Community (former Europe Fellowship Program) in the recent years, in collaboration with our partner CoCreative, with the Ashoka Globalizer and with the experience of different colleagues around the world, specifically on system change strategies and multi-stakeholder collaboration to advance an EACH mindset in ideating collective solutions to social challenges.

> **This toolkit summarizes the methodology used, the outcomes and learnings, and the suggested next steps for other teams wanting to embark on such initiatives. It is not to be intended as a finished and closed document, but as a first step to harvest all our learnings in this process and synthetize our findings in a strategy that can be replicated, a strategy to advance multi-stakeholder collaborations in different purpose areas and bringing ecosystems closer to embodying our EACH mindset and approaches.**

### About Ashoka Europe One Community

community.ashoka.org

Ashoka Europe One Community is the strategic program that emerged in 2022 from the experience of the Europe Fellowship Program. We accelerate and systematize Ashoka community engagement across Europe, offering pathways for engaging in the EACH movement. We: (a) consolidate tools and frameworks to put changemaking into practice; (b) engage our community through learning journeys and deepen our collective practice on core changemaking skills; (c) accelerate multi-stakeholder collaboration initiatives for systems change; (d) nurture and cultivate the entire community through meaningful and inclusive connection spaces.

### About Hello World

helloworld.ashoka.org

Ashoka's Hello World is an emerging Purpose that has been activating changemaking in the field of migration around the world since 2015, starting in Europe (Hello Europe) and Latin America (Hola América) and spreading globally. Our strategy stands on three fundamental pillars: we go wide by identifying, supporting and connecting changemakers. We go deep by scaling system-changing solutions and showing how the framework can be changed in high potential ecosystems. And we tell the story to knead these changes into policy structures and the public imagination.

*To know more and to engage in this harvesting and synthetizing work, please reach out to Ella Goncarova from Hello Europe. A huge shoutout to Giulia Sergi from One Community for co-designing the process and co-writing this toolkit.*

# 1. Introduction

## About the field of migration

Migration and refugee movements across borders have always taken place, however, over the last decade, these movements are happening more suddenly and spread out across more geographies, exposing the inadequacy of the systems around them: **silos and disconnection between key stakeholders, a lack of innovation in the sector, outdated legal frameworks**, and, perhaps most importantly, **a persistent perception of migrants as passive subjects of pity, compassion or worse**, instead of being seen as potential contributors to the communities they join.

Solving these challenges within the sector requires a new framework of how migration is perceived globally. Essentially, **we need a world where all people on the move are recognized and supported as changemakers**. A world in which the knowledge and insights created by migrants are valued and utilized widely, where movement is seen as a shared experience, and where communities of migrants and diaspora are activated as changemaking hubs. Transforming this framework **requires new, innovative, and systemic responses, sharing and scaling solutions across geographies**.

## How this Ecosystem Accelerator emerged

In 2021 the Hello World team asked themselves, along with the community of systems changing social entrepreneurs, partners, and other thought leaders, what the most pressing need and exciting opportunities were in our sector. The Ecosystem Accelerator emerged from those conversations and thanks to the generous support of Zalando, a partner that has been part of our core team from the beginning.

By then Hello World had carried out 14 accelerators across 17 countries in Europe and Latin America, helping +120 social innovators to scale their initiatives. From that experience, we found that the most powerful, desired and effective support we could provide to social entrepreneurs was when we brought them together with key stakeholders in their particular topic who had the power and energy to create change. In these spaces, the different players started to build a shared understanding of key issues and root causes, where innovations (mainly brought by the social innovators) could be applied, and how they could work together to implement changes at scale. This led us to dream of a different way of carrying out an accelerator: one that was focused on a topic or sector (an "ecosystem") rather than an individual solution, and that brought together the key stakeholders from the beginning to build the accelerating solutions together, rather than one entrepreneur having to go out and convince others.

We also found that putting social entrepreneurs in the lead-facilitator role in these gatherings enabled the drive for action and change to be at the center. For a methodology to guide this conversation, we adapted multiple resources Ashoka already used and that Hello Europe had developed more in depth, as well as our work with policy makers (a key stakeholder in all changes). We called it the Ecosystem Accelerator and decided to test it out.

Through the generous support of Zalando, we launched an Ecosystem Accelerator pilot in the topic of Migrant Entrepreneurship and Talent in 2022. Throughout the process we finetuned the methodology, and then systematized it into the document you hold in your hands. At the moment of publication, Hello World has one other active Ecosystem Accelerator and we are working on launching two more in the next year.

## Collaboration between Ashoka Europe One Community and Hello Europe

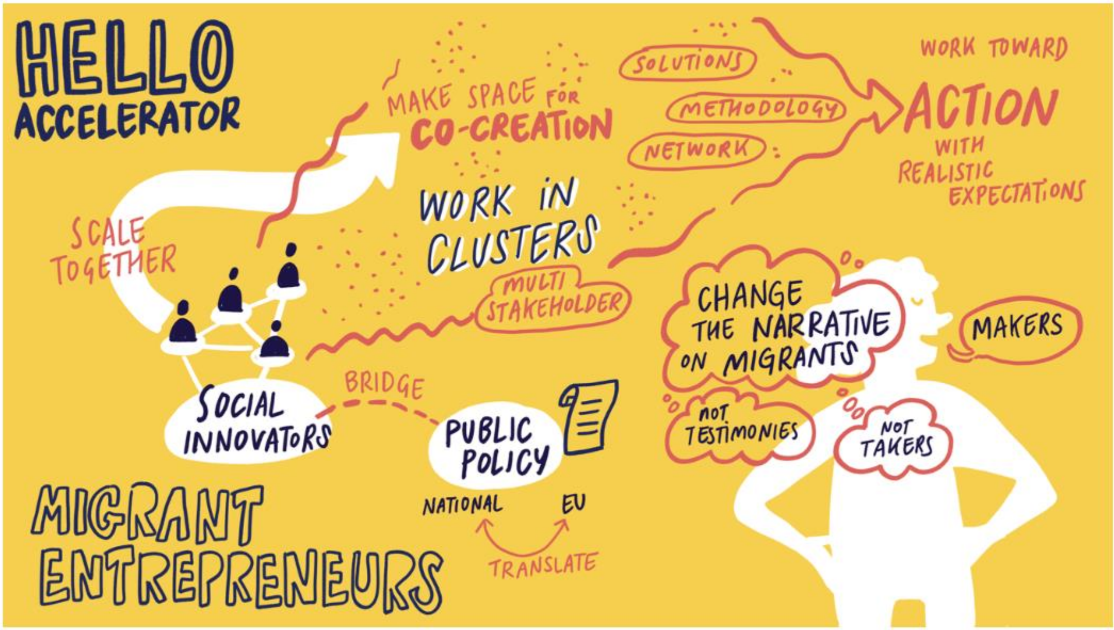
This need emerged in conjunction with other strategic shifts in Ashoka Europe. Within the Europe strategy transition process, we decided to align and synthesize the different offers and experiences for our community. Ashoka Europe's One Community strategy was consolidated, and one of its strategic pillars is to enable collaboration spaces on strategic focus areas to drive collaborative impact, building on the experience of the many prototypes of collaborative initiatives that naturally emerged within Ashoka.

The Hello Europe Ecosystem Accelerator developed in this context, and we believe it serves as an important pilot that provides learnings and practices that teams can apply globally to their multi-stakeholder collaboration initiatives to guide ecosystems towards enabling long-lasting social change.

## The Ecosystem Accelerator as a tool to embody EACH

The power of the EACH frame change rests on the foundation of activating key players across sectors. Indeed, the more changemakers there are across all parts of a system and are participating in the change process, the more diversity of knowledge, perspectives, and information we have, and therefore, the better we see the big picture in all its complexity. With this as a foundation we can form powerful strategies to shift that system, and ultimately, the faster the system will change, the more equitable the change will be and the more resilient the system will become.

With this mindset, we can include diverse multi-stakeholders in a collaboration and set the frame of the ecosystem they are all part. This becomes a powerful pathway to represent the diverse perspectives, values, and interests in a system, therefore informing a holistic understanding of what is happening within the system and what is needed to improve it. It enables greater accountability around the needs of all stakeholders and creates long–term ownership over the issue and possible solutions, allowing the simultaneous implementation of multiple interventions by multiple actors. All in all, a collaborative approach increases our likelihood to thrive together in the complex, dynamic, and ever-evolving nature of systems, to create more equitable, longer-lasting systems change that benefits many or all stakeholders.



# 2. Accelerator Goals and the Team behind it

## Goals and outputs

The Hello Europe's Ecosystem Accelerator was designed as a cluster-focused acceleration process that **brings together key change leaders from different stakeholder groups to analyze, build and implement a strategy to accelerate impact for the good of all in a given sector**. There are two main steps to the accelerator:

1) **Building a strategy**: We select a group of 10-15 key change leaders from relevant stakeholder groups (social entrepreneurs, migrant background changemakers, corporate leaders, policymakers, researchers, etc.) to gather regularly for 3-4 months in facilitated bi-weekly sessions to analyze the sector and decide on the key areas that need to be accelerated. As a result, four outputs were expected:

    a. Insight products for the sector (e.g., research items, papers, interviews, op-ed).
    b. A policy strategy focused on the EU level, to be taken up by the Ashoka policy unit.
    c. (If participants decide it is needed) a collaborative project plan designed by the cluster as a whole or particular members wanting to collaborate that directly addresses some of the issues identified as key.
    d. A basic map of key innovators and stakeholders in the sector, including potential Fellow candidates.

2) **Implementation**: The strategies co-designed in Phase I will be implemented by a newly formed team. This process was defined by the group in Phase I, but it can also serve as an off-ramp for those unable to continue and on-ramp to involve new participants on in this phase. One year after the accelerator we can already showcase some of the outcomes of this second phase.

This report **focuses on this first phase: what are the facilitation tools, mindsets, methodologies Ashoka owns to build a multi-stakeholder group together that collaborates and strategizes together.**

**Watch a video capturing the process**

## Design Team

The Ashoka team implementing the accelerator was formed of 6-7 people:[1]

- 1 LRP and Ashoka's expert in the field (Kenny Clewett)
- 1 project manager (Piotr Marek Kolodziej, then Ella Goncarova) – engaging social entrepreneurs
- 1 process manager / accelerator facilitator (Giulia Sergi) – facilitating the working sessions
- 1 junior project manager (Ibrahem Ahmad) – engaging migrant changemakers
- 1 partnership manager (Ella Goncarova) – engaging funders and corporate leaders
- 1 policy expert (Laura Batalla) – engaging policy experts
- 1 communications manager (Shalini Arias Hurtado in the final stage) – to gather, synthesize and share learnings

External support:

- 1 social entrepreneur (Nicolai Strøm-Olsen) – participating in the sessions, insider's perspective in debriefings and consultation throughout the process
- 1 Artist (Norma Nardi) – creating drawings live in the online sessions
- 1 Onsite facilitator (Matthias Scheffelmeier) – facilitating an in-person workshop

Having a team with different expertise and clear roles, massively helped in the success of the initiative. The facilitator builds the agendas and creates the right space in the sessions, but people who are more experts on the topic can guide the conversations if needed, to make sure they keep aligned with our overall Ashoka vision. A very useful practice was to assign each team member a stakeholder group with which they not only engaged more deeply throughout the process but also represented their voice in the design team.

> **One recommendation and an ideal scenario is to involve one or two leaders from the participants as part of this "design team" (at least one should be a Social Entrepreneur that is a Fellow or equivalent). They bring the topic expertise and leadership, but need thorough work to make sure they are (1) recognized as leaders and feel ownership, and (2) aligned with the overall vision and language. This is critical for the success of the initiative, since these two people will likely carry on the work to the implementation phase, allowing Ashoka to drop the direct coordination role.**

## Resources

You can find an overview of all mentioned resources in this folder, referenced throughout the toolkit.

[1] As this was a pilot and, as such, also a space to develop and systematize methodology, we had a larger team than would be required for subsequent accelerators. In any case, all these roles had varying percentages of FTE equivalencies, none worked full time on the project. We estimate that a total of 2.5 staff FTEs dedicated to the project over its execution (1 year, approx.) is likely enough, provided there is some previous expertise on the topic and knowledge of the methodologies employed.

# 3. Mapping and interviews

## Selection Criteria

**Selecting the ecosystem** to accelerate impact in is a key first step. It requires, first, a precise framing of the topic (social innovations mapping tools can help here), defining geographical scope and considering the readiness of the system. Additionally, one must identify the network to be activated, and decide if the desire to collaborate among the key players is high enough. In this case the topic was framed as Migrant Entrepreneurship and Employment in Europe, built on our own 7-year long work and analysis of innovative solutions from the Hello Network, emerging from 14 impact accelerators run across Europe and Latin America which helped scaled 120 solutions, along with a Policy Unit that has successfully explored this topic with social entrepreneurs and key EU decision makers. Additionally, we knew that migrant entrepreneurship and employment is an exciting, growing sector with a multitude of local and national solutions that are producing a positive and novel impact on society across Europe. That said, the field has a series of important challenges around a lack of connectivity, knowledge exchange, data and shared resources. (We had a strong intuition about the root causes, based on conversations with Fellows especially, which enabled us to frame the topic in a deep way from the beginning.) It was also a topic that interested our primary partner for the pilot (Zalando), and we decided together on the initial framing.

**Selecting the right participants** is the most important element for the success of such accelerators. The first step is to internally align on selection criteria: qualities and skills we think the participants need to embody for the work to be meaningful. The Hello Europe team agreed that we were looking for people who:

- can commit to a deep process where everyone plays a key role in strategizing and designing collective solutions, which we can opt into implementing afterwards,
- are open to sharing their experience and learnings and co-creating with others in a trustworthy and empathetic environment,
- have a knowledge of the ecosystem as a whole and are at a moment where they can spend time and energy working at a high level and think of systemic solutions with others.

In general, we recommend selecting a maximum of 16-18 final participants and a minimum of 7-8: having more people might hinder deep connections and engagement, having less may create an under-representative group and endanger your continuity when some (inevitably) drop out. The Hello Europe Accelerator had 16 final participants, roughly divided as follows:

- 6 social entrepreneurs, including 3 with a migrant background
- 2 policy experts
- 5 corporate leaders
- 3 researchers

Click here to learn more about the participants and check their profiles.

Please know that these numbers are flexible depending on the circumstances. Check out the *Other Resources & Tools* below for more detailed literature and suggestions about networks.

## DEI & participation

"Nothing about us without us" should be the mantra of any multi-stakeholder initiatives. Including representatives with lived experience from the groups most affected by the problem we are trying to address and/or by the solutions we are trying to build is essential. In simpler terms, having the "client" at the table is essential for a good product to emerge. For this accelerator this meant having entrepreneurs with a migrant background both on our staff and in the participant group. Including a diverse group of stakeholders provides reality checks on the process and legitimizes the results. Often inviting a young changemaker or two can also be essential, in order to bring in fresh perspectives.

## Setting Expectations

In our interviews we would describe the expected process as "short but deep." Short, because we planned 3 months of online meetings twice a week. However, if the work goes well, the group consolidates and wants to continue working together, which makes the commitment much longer. After 3 months of online meetings, the group worked for 2 more months on finalizing their recommendation paper and many of them started to set up independent working groups to implement specific initiatives. Managing these expectations is important from the very beginning to avoid tensions and misunderstandings later in the process. We aim to select highly committed people, but also leaving space for the right energy to emerge throughout the process: we want them to be able to commit in small chunks, so that further commitment comes from their own desire with no pressure.

> **Going back, we would define clear stages of the process, with commitment and outputs connected with each. Any further commitment beyond Phase I needs to be discussed and renewed at a later stage.**

## Mapping

The Hello Europe network already had roughly 500+ relevant stakeholders in the migration ecosystem, which reduced the time needed for initial mapping and nomination gathering. Specific to this topic, we mapped over 130 organizations from 23 countries, interviewed 33 of them, and identified 16 leaders from business, policy, research and social innovation sectors as well as key leaders from the most impacted communities (i.e., leaders with a migrant background) across Europe. Throughout the process, the framing of the issue was finetuned.

In general, we suggest the following process for mapping and participation selection (min. 3 months):

- **2-3 weeks | Nominations round:** ask colleagues and other network members for nominations (experts to help frame issue and potential participants).
- **2 weeks | Initial selection & Outreach:** define a first selection of people to reach out to (around 50).
- **1 month | Interviews:** Conduct interviews with the people who positively reply to your outreach (about 30, divided among team members). Take precise notes of the interviews, collect nominations, and constantly discuss within the team who the potential participants can be.
- **2 weeks | Define final list of participants and send confirmation emails:** Gather a database of all mapped changemakers which can later serve you for validation sessions.
- **2-3 weeks | Take time during this process to review and discuss the new information gathered during the interviews**, to see if they change any of the original assumptions or focus you were starting the collective work with. (See *Interviews* and *Learnings and Suggestions* paragraphs below)

For funders and corporate leaders, we organized a panel discussion with some of the key experts and Fellows involved to help them understand the topic and relevancy for them in more detail, so they better see their role in the ecosystem and are encouraged to take their place in the group. Then we followed up individually with a lighter version of an interview.

> **It is essential to engage Ashoka's local offices when mapping, to not miss any potential participants, and avoid misunderstandings at later stages.**

## Interviews

The interviews have two main and critical goals. First, they are the space to manage expectations on both sides: potential participants gain clarity on the process, including its blurriness and complexity, while the design team understands who fits best for the participant group. The most important thing to focus on during the interviews therefore is full transparency and honesty. Be honest about the time and energy commitment (see Expectations paragraph above) and open up to any doubts and concerns that might emerge. Make sure you leave the interview with a clear understanding on whether the person would be interested and fully committed to the process. Don't rush to conclusions, but rather ask the person if what you understood from them is correct. If the interviewee is still uncertain, organize another meeting later, so they have some time to think or ask more clarification questions.

Interviews are a privileged space where Ashoka and the team gain new learnings and perspectives on the issue and ecosystem they are working on and we are trying to affect. It is very important to take the time to let the content of these interviews sink in within the design team, as well as with other Ashoka teams if the topics discussed are cross-cutting or intertwined with the work of other initiatives. Indeed, new insights might affect parts of our original assumptions or the focus of the collective work. They are also the first real step of the collective work: to understand the context we are operating in, what already exists, what works, what doesn't, what the role of the collective can be. Importantly, not taking into consideration the perspectives provided by the people during the interviews can create a loss of trust if they are selected as participants and don't feel the time spent in the interview influenced the process in one way or another.

### *Templates*

- One-pager / other promotion material
- First outreach email template
- Interview Script template
- Database template
- Confirmation email template
- Participants Profiles Template

### *Other Resources & Tools*

- In the Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration Course, Ashoka and CoCreative present the ideal set-up of a multi-stakeholder network. If you are planning something larger, more long-term and with more resources, we suggest you watch the video here or look at the summary table here.
- Interviews as a tool to develop insights into the system: Watch the video on Empathy Interviews from the Multistakeholder Collaboration online course from Ashoka and CoCreative and read the guidelines and templates for the Empathy Interviews.

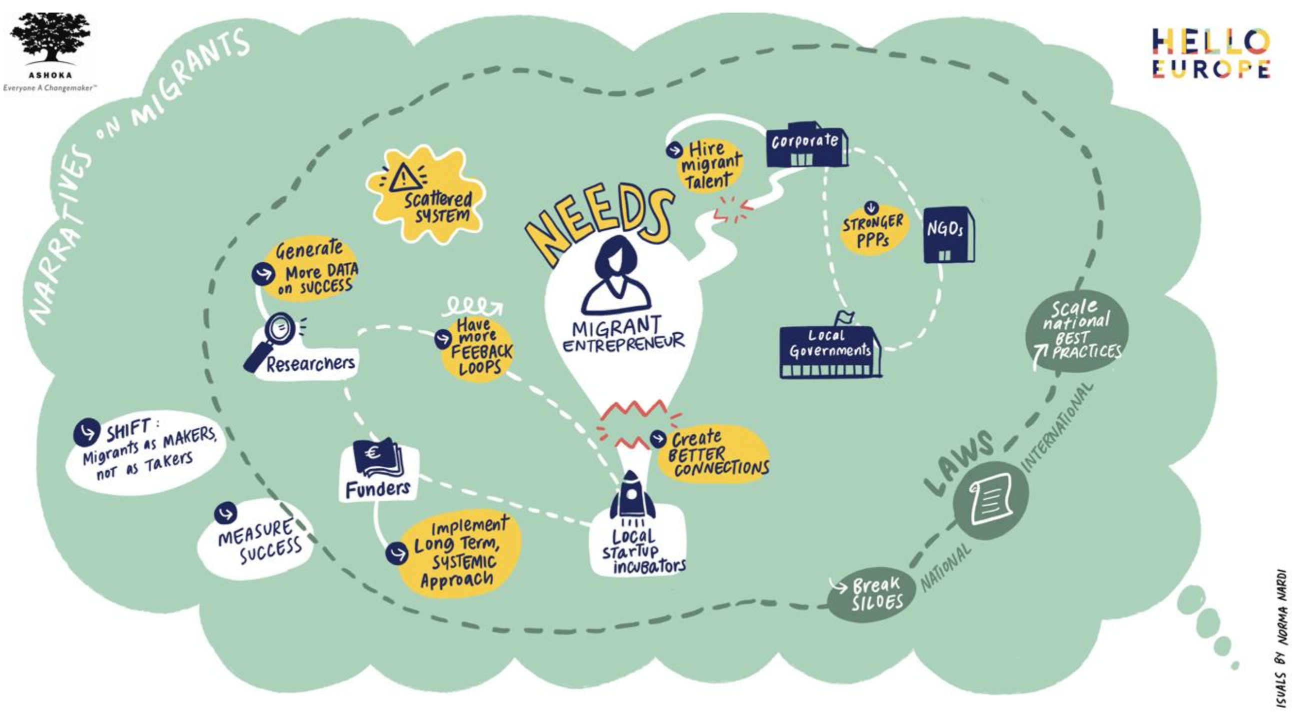
### *Learnings & Suggestions*

A lot of useful information is gathered through the interviews, as well as new important points of view. One realization by the Hello Europe team at the end of this process is that we hadn't planned enough time to gather these insights and let them shape the process and its scope more precisely. Therefore, we suggest that teams plan specific time for this, during the interview process or right afterwards.

Sharing these insights also makes the work move along easier, because the whole team is aware of the new insights shared and they don't just rest with the interviewer.

Moreover, we recommend to (1) consider key skills and competencies of each potential participants as they become crucial later in the process and need to complement each other, (2) identify a leader that can help you steer the group and co-create the process with you, (3) collect nominations which will help you build a pool of leaders for validation sessions inviting a larger audience to contribute with their expertise but potentially become implementation partners of funders, and (4) map relevant data and knowledge products already created in the ecosystem.

The interviews are arguably the most important step in the process. Saving, planning and fundraising for more time for the interview part will bring more added value to the initiative. (See *Interviews* paragraph above).



# 4. Before starting the Online Process: flow, principles, and preparation

## Process flow

The core of the Ecosystem Accelerator process consisted in 6 online facilitated working sessions with the participants of 2 hours each. The goals of these sessions were shared with the participants in the interviews and during the first meeting:

- ***Connections:*** Create meaningful connections that can spark separate collaborations independent from the process, create spaces for learnings from each other's experiences.
- ***Alignment:*** Assess the social problem and questions we want to tackle more specifically, the systemic barriers we want to address as a group and align on the focus of the collective insights and interventions we want to build.
- ***Ideation:*** Define the insights or recommendations we want to share and define possible interventions, a few very clear outputs (and commitment on their delivery) this group wants to work on. Types of outputs we expect:
    - insight products (to share what we learned together with the sector)
    - a policy strategy (how we think policy at EU level and beyond might be impacted best)
    - a list of great solutions in the sector
    - and, potentially, a collaborative solution plan that some participants might want to work on together.

There are multiple ways and tools to reach these goals. What we used specifically for this group is not perfect and should be taken as an inspiration, adjusted, changed, and integrated with other resources. The *Other Resources* list below offers inspiration.

In general, an effective flow to keep in mind, particularly for *Alignment* and *Ideation* consists of:

1. Problem analysis and aligning on the problem we want to address as a group.
2. (Eco)system analysis to see where the group can intervene in the system.
3. Targeted System Change or Critical Shifts: what needs to change and how?
4. Interventions: what intervention can be implemented to reach those changes?
5. Prototyping: how do we move forward to implement the interventions prioritized?

Having this flow in mind, we advise you to be open to the energy and dynamic to the group. Our design team met the day after each session to debrief, reflect on the discussions, and decide how to proceed further. The group received a summary email from their previous session and an outline of what to expect next. We also had a team member dedicated to capture the process and key insights (e.g., problem statement, barriers) throughout which then served as a base for our insight product.

Throughout the process we also recommend checking your working hypothesis with other ecosystem players: a larger network of people you have mapped throughout the selection phase and other actors identified by the participants. More on this in the *Validation Session* paragraph below.

> **To foster *Connections*, we tested a series of Cafeteria Sessions: optional additional meetings, once a month, where the participants could come in and, without any formal facilitation, update each other on latest achievements, challenges or simply getting to know each other. These sessions were not successful in our case, with no participation from the group, probably because one additional meeting each month was too much to ask. We therefore opted for having quick informal check-ins in breakouts at the beginning of every meeting. In general, connections spark autonomously if the group is engaged and space throughout the process is secured to notice synergies.**

## Process Principles

Keeping in mind the main design principles of such processes (or even sharing them with the group during the first meeting and reminding them throughout the process) can be useful to get ready for an unpredictable process. CoCreative created a list of six frequent patterns in collaborations, that are useful to keep in mind and refer back to when feeling lost in the process. The full list can be found in the *Other Resources* section below: two of them, that were particularly useful for this and other groups, are reported here.

"Innovation is often perceived as a neat and orderly process, but it's messy and unpredictable. It's helpful for participants to understand that design-led innovation will not be a linear process that goes straight from problem to solution. It will feel messy and unclear at times, especially when they are full of insights with no clear path forward, but the strategy and solutions will emerge in time."

"It's helpful to be clear and intentional about moving through cycles of divergence and convergences when leading collaboration innovation. There are times when you want to open the network up to greater possibilities, expand the analysis, and generate more ideas. At other times, you need to narrow the scope, focus the analysis and choose which priorities to take forward. Be aware of your own biases and focus on what the group needs at the time."

Another important background knowledge to keep in mind before starting (and that can be presented in the first meeting too) is the *CALM agenda*, developed by CoCreative, a framework that helps leaders design the optimal mix of Connecting, Aligning, Learning, and Making needed to advance effective collaboration and co-design.

## Prepare documents to spark the discussion (hint: use drawing/art!)

Once your participants are selected, it is useful to create a document with the profiles of the participants, to share with all of them before the process kicks off, so that they know who to expect in the meetings.

Bringing something to start the discussion during the first meeting can be very beneficial to kick off, it shows strong commitment to have an active role and motivates participants to do the same. Ideally, the material presented showcases the insights gathered so far, both from the interviews and from any work done previously. This can be a first hypothesis of the problem statement; a first uncomplete analysis of the ecosystem; a summary of the main elements that emerged from the interviews.

In the Hello Europe Ecosystem Accelerator, we invited the participating social entrepreneurs to align on their problem statement, to use it as a first hypothesis to work on. Given the history of Hello Europe and Ashoka, we wanted to start the group conversations by focusing on what social entrepreneurs see as the need, putting their perspective at the center of the work.

We did this by first asking the social entrepreneurs to add their inputs in a shared document, which had short inputs from our team already, and then our Artist (see Chapter 2) summarized the result in a picture that represented the broken (eco)system, that we showed and edited during the first meeting.

## Templates

- Participants' Profiles
- Hello Europe's first hypothesis of Problem Statement: initial brainstorming document
- Hello Europe's first hypothesis of Problem Statement: final drawing presented in the first meeting

## Other Resources & Tools

- Six Patterns in Collaborative Innovation by CoCreative
- Deep dive into the Converging and Diverging Pattern
- Deep dive into the Leveraging Tensions Pattern
- Detailed explanation of CoCreative's CALM Agenda

# 5. Online sessions

## 1st Session

*Purpose: Connection, goals clarification, initial discussion on problem*
*Outcome: Divergence on problem(s)*

The opening of this session focuses on re-introducing the process and its goals, and naming some of the expected process patterns and principles (see above). Preparing an exciting introduction is key, but it is important to keep it short: people are looking forward to practical participation: to see in action what we promised in words, and to experiment and *play* with each other. This is when they start getting to know each other. Breakout groups and well-facilitated intro rounds are a must have.

The working part of this meeting is brainstorming (diverging) on the problem. After we presented the picture developed by our Artist, with our hypothetical problem statement – i.e. a picture of the broken (eco)system – we gave two minutes to reflect in silence and then asked participants to share what they thought was missing in the picture, what they disagreed with, and what they were already working on or thought they could contribute to. The Artist added and edited the picture as people spoke.

The last minutes of the meeting are used to summarize the results of the session, explain what will come next and talk about logistics if needed. In our case, the discussion on the broken system raised ideas of barriers that could quite naturally be categorized into emerging macro-areas: our team committed to organize the inputs into these before the following session and use the next session to dive into the root causes underlying the problems in the macro-areas. We suggested that participants watch the Problem Tree video from the Ashoka Systems Change Course (see *Other Resources*), to prepare to define the systemic root causes of the barriers we were identifying together.

### *Hints*

- Facilitate the discussion by giving people 2 minutes each to share their input, be strict with time and do 2-3 rounds.
- Try framing it as a "Yes and" exercise: everyone starts their sentence with "Yes and" as a connection to what the previous person said. This creates a generative dynamic, rather than an oppositional one.
- Take notes of what people say, don't rely only on the drawing. Don't forget to also harvest what they write in the chat.
- Pay attention to language and expressions participants use and make sure there is a growing shared understanding. As they come from different sectors, it takes time to establish common language and break out of professional patterns.
- Make sure you clearly introduce the role of Ashoka, the design team, and the co-leader (if there is one) from the group that is joining the design team.

## 2nd Session

*Purpose: Connection, alignment on the systemic problem we are tackling*
*Outcome: Converging on the root causes of the problem*

In preparation for this session, the Hello Europe team clustered inputs received during the previous one into four main areas (Support systems and funding is unsustainable; The sector is fragmented, making connections and scaling up difficult; Lack of direct links to the business and employment sector; Narrative and diversity). This gathering and labelling part is key is to help the group move from a *diverging* phase (brainstorming and sharing all ideas, which happened in the first meeting) to a *converging* phase (where there is more structure and focus). If clustering into macro-groups is not possible beforehand (because of lack of time, or a need for more clarity from the group), we suggest avoiding more brainstorming/diverging in this second meeting, and instead do follow-up work as a design team and add the elements you see missing as suggestions to start the next meeting, or reach out to specific people in the group to help elaborate more on the inputs that emerged. It is important to come to the second session with an ordered version of what was said to move forward with.

The second meeting starts with a recap of the results from the first session and the presentation of the preparation work done by the design team, in this case the four sub-topics identified. Having the picture summary from the Artist is again very helpful to give a concise and clear summary of the outputs of the initial brainstorming and how they fit into different clusters.

To move to a converging phase, we used the inputs provided by the Problem Tree analysis tool that Ashoka uses in their systems change strategies. We didn't apply the full tool, it served more as inspiration to move quickly. In particular, the approach we used to deep dive into the problem and reach its systemic root causes was to keep asking ourselves "why is this happening" to venture deeper rather than broader.

We divided participants into four sub-groups, one for each sub-topic we had identified. This process can also be applied if no sub-groups emerge in your collaboration, we still recommend working in smaller groups albeit on the same topic or different angles of it. It is key that all participants can have time to discuss and connect with each other.

Each group had a facilitator from the design team and a shared document where to harvest the inputs. The goal for these conversations was to come up with 2-5 root causes for each of the sub-topics that were systemic (something that, if tackled, has a ripple effect on other elements of the system) and addressable (something we can write recommendations on). To get there, we went back into diverging mode for a little bit within the sub-groups: again, diverge to then converge. We proceeded as follows:

- In each group, and with the sub-topic document open, the discussion started from the root causes that already emerged in the first call (that the design team included in each document), adding anything missing. Then we went deeper, asking "why" those were "bullet points" happening, and then, again, "Why?" … until we started reaching root causes that they were satisfied with.
- We did two "World-café" type rounds of 30 minutes each. Participants joined two different groups (one in the first round and one in the second round – although they could stay in the same group if they preferred). In the second round, the facilitator presents where the first group of people landed and asks the new group to add anything that the first group might have missed, or to go deeper using their fresh eyes on the topic.
- At the end, each group prioritized 2-5 root causes for each sub-topic that are systemic, addressable and that they felt passionate about solving.
- Each group shared back in the main group and we opened up a short discussion, where more insights for each topic were collected, which led to more specificity and intentionality on the focus areas we were choosing. To give one example, we learnt from this conversation that the fourth barrier identified (narrative and diversity) was too wide, and actually was better related to a lack of data on migrant talents' experiences, stories, identities (which is why there is a lack of stories and apparent diversity, despite the fact that migrants from many backgrounds are founding producing successful ventures throughout Europe).

As always, the meeting closes with next steps to prepare for the following meeting and a closing round of feelings about today. In our case the most imminent next step was the validation session (see specific section below).

*Hints*

- Always **ask for validation from the group.** When you present the summary from the first meeting, for instance, ask if anything relevant is missing. Give them a very specific (short) amount of time for this. When you present the prep work you have done (in our case, the four main sub-topics), leave time for participants to share their feedback. Through feedback people take ownership, and this is fundamental in an ecosystem accelerator.
- When feedback suggests changing the process or raises serious doubts: first, **give space to reply to each other's feedback**, don't immediately intervene as a facilitator (and never become defensive). In many cases, challenges or doubts are solved by other members of the group. If serious doubts remain, invite the group to trust the process and continue navigating it (remind them about one of the key process principles explained above), but also be open to changing or adapting it: ask them what they would suggest, remember they are also experts that can co-facilitate the group on occasion.
- One of the most important things to **be mindful of in order to gain and nurture trust from the group,** is to be very careful to always explicitly include input received by the participants during the process. It seems automatic, but it's easy to overlook, especially if some of the input doesn't fully align with our original assumptions. In our case, it meant including all the elements harvested during the brainstorming (through the notes, the chat, the session recording and the drawing) in the sub-topic conversations. In the document that each group had to discuss their sub-topic, initial inputs were already there of things that had emerged from the brainstorming.
- When you use these types of activities and exercises, make sure you also **write very concrete guidelines** in the chat, with the precise times for each piece of the group conversation and clear suggestions of the steps to take. At the same time, be open and fluid, don't force people to follow the precise steps you had in mind: these guidelines are mainly useful for the facilitator if the conversations are going down a rabbit hole or need some prodding.

## 3rd Session

*Purpose: Checking our hypothetical shared goal / aligning on a shared goal*
*Outcome: A shared vision/goal*

We are reaching the middle of the process and things will get messy – this is exactly what is supposed to happen! For the next couple of meetings there will be a lot of tensions to be leveraged between those who are now impatient to get more practical and reach a result (the social entrepreneurs or fellows generally lead the charge here!), and those who feel we are running too fast and there are still assumptions to be rediscussed (stakeholders from the academy and policy world often will be in this group). These tensions are natural. It helps to remember the patterns/principles mentioned in the chapter above (specific deep dive on Leveraging Tensions can be found here) in order to keep encouraged!

Before the call, the design team (consisting of Hello Europe staff and one social entrepreneur) decided to present the hypothesis they were seeing emerging from the group, to validate it and see if the group was going in the same direction. The hypothesis we were working with was that more connected local/national organizations supporting entrepreneurs would increase success rate for migrant entrepreneurs and improve employment possibilities. We also had the assumption that these local networks exist, but they are not connected at the European level or across borders. This pointed to a potential collective goal that sought to strengthen these support networks across borders (potentially building a "back-bone" organization for the sector).

What we did, in short, was *Checking Back* (one of the *Six Patterns*!) on the hypothetical goal the design team saw emerging. This opened a few questions and tensions on the specific role of this collective (e.g. Did this mean advancing these networks and connections *ourselves*?). We decided to keep the questions about whose role it was to do this on the table for future discussions: our desired output for Phase I of the Accelerator was recommendations for the sector (not necessarily implementations), therefore once we aligned on the critical shifts and solutions we would recommend, we could discuss roles in implementing them. It also helped us to take a more birds-eye perspective before diving into details of the different shifts that need to happen to address identified barriers (which we would do starting at session 4). This is a way to open our thoughts once again, before defining a definite scope and focusing on action: it can be useful for seeing if more elements emerge that we were missing. In our case, the four focus areas we were working with remained very solid.

After a discussion we did an imagination exercise. Everyone in silence, with eyes closed and listening to some guiding prompts, envisioned what this European network might look like. "Imagine we are 10 years from now and this network finally exists, it's the new environment we are all working in. What are people doing? What is making this network a success?" The participants were invited to wear hats of the different stakeholders who played a role in making this network successful: the founder and leader of an organization that supports migrant entrepreneurs, a newcomer who wants to build a company or a local shop, a policy maker or a big corporate leader wanting to enable this work to move quickly. The largest chunk of the call was dedicated to harvesting all the insights that emerged from the imagination exercise.

In summary, this session can be dedicated to aligning on the goal we are working towards. Naming it, as a hypothesis, and envisioning it. Nudging the group to use their creative imaginations (vs. the pragmatic, "what ifs" and "who will do the work" can help us start grasping something new emerging from the group, breaking away from patterns of seeing everything through one's own work. The main outcomes of such an imagination exercise in fact are:

- Fostering alignment. Everyone is dreaming the same dream, having a clear vision they are connecting to and seeing themselves in.
- Start expressing some ideas, or "pictures" of the shifts that need to happen in the system for this vision to emerge. Better defining this will be done more in detail in the following sessions.

Another exercise or tool that can be used at this stage, instead of coming with a suggested hypothesis, or instead of the imagination exercise, is the Mast Goal and Focus & Frame exercises that can be found in the *Resources* below.

*Hints*

- Prepare for messiness, here tensions among the group can surface questions of scoping, language, what target group are we aiming to impact, or doubts about what this group is meant to accomplish.

## Validation Session

Halfway through the process it might be a good idea to host a Validation Session with a larger network, to validate the direction and hypothesis the group is landing on, see how they resonate with other key stakeholders and gather feedback and input from thought leaders in the sector. It also allows a larger network of leaders to keep involved and feel ownership. The invite is generally for primarily for those that were identified as key leaders and (in some cases) interviewed in the mapping phase, but it is also a great chance to invite others that the participants might recommend throughout the sessions or other stakeholders that become relevant considering the new insights and directions emerging. The invite should include a short description of the process and a list of the participants involved. It should be framed as what it is, an exclusive event for thought and action leaders in the sector who want to see things move forward.

The format can be very straightforward: an introduction contextualizing the conversation, a summary of the hypothesis and insights that the group wants to test, and then break-out groups to receive feedback and insights. Each group needs to have a facilitator and a note keeper and ideally a prominent role is given to the participants of the accelerator, giving them space to share inputs and more details and/or facilitating the whole conversation. The social entrepreneur co-leader and other participants should also take on roles presenting the information: this is the first moment the accelerator goes public and it must show the co-creation spirit.

Hypotheses that can be tested at this stage usually are the overall goal for the accelerator and the barriers identified. There will be another Validation Session at the end of the process to confirm and improve the solutions or recommendations that have emerged. Of course, such a space is also a chance to motivate these particular stakeholders to take concrete actions and commit to the change process longer term. Therefore, ask a question on what each stakeholder (clustered in stakeholder groups) could contribute or do. This might also unearth more insights for the solutions ideation phase and keep motivating the larger network to be part of the change.

The session we held was very well attended, including thought leaders in high positions that are very careful with their time. We found deep interest from them in hearing from an experience like this that had Social Entrepreneurship at the center, and many contributed ideas and feedback in earnest.

*Hints*

- Make sure this Validation Session is co-designed with the accelerator participants. They need to feel full ownership of it and of the hypotheses that are being validated. They need to be aligned on messages to share with the audience and take the lead in facilitating the discussions.
- This is also a chance for Ashoka Fellows or key members of our community to show up, so a space to share their solutions can be added if it feels relevant: a simple way to do this is to have one social entrepreneur per group as a facilitator and ask them to present themselves and their work before the group discussion.
- Also in this case, using art and showing the hypothesis and insights from the process in pictures adds a lot of value to the presentation and conversation.

## 4th Session

*Purpose: Deep dive into the shifts needed in the ecosystem to reach our goal*
*Outcome: Critical Shifts identified*

We are now over halfway through the process and it is therefore time to move from *Alignment* to *Ideation*. We used the tool called Critical Shifts, developed by CoCreative. Critical Shifts are statements of two things: (1) Which part of the current system that isn't working right now (building from the barriers we have identified thus far), and (2) What that part of the system should look in the future. By defining the critical shifts that need to happen to achieve our goal, we create mini "problem-solving spaces" for people to work on. One of the big challenges in working with stakeholders is that people want to rush straight from the problem to solution. Sticking with the discipline of defining clear critical shifts helps us be concise about what we're really trying to solve, identify those shifts that are the most powerful and strategic, and come up with ideas for how we might make each shift happen before we settle on the particular solution to pursue together.

After some time at the beginning of the call to reflect on the Validation Session, we used one hour to work in breakout groups. Each team focused on one of the four barriers identified and, now, better defined (Data collection research; Formal frameworks for collaborations; Pipeline & improved HR policies to find, receive and retain migrant talents; Funding). As always, we first checked back with the group if they saw any group or barrier missing that they wanted to work on.

Using Miro, everyone in each group harvested no more than 5 Critical Shifts they saw necessary, providing details on what needs to change in that specific piece of the system. They then shared their selected critical shifts back in the plenary. Key guidelines to keep in mind to choose and prioritize the shifts are:

- What shift will advance our goal most powerfully?
- What shift, if solved first, would enable other shifts to happen more powerfully and/or easily?
- Which shifts would not happen without a network like this to move them forward?

> *Hints*
> - At this stage, as the group naturally divides into smaller teams, consider supporting that and building these sub-teams more intentionally which can help in the Phase II. You might also see more clearly whether you have strong leaders emerging from the group.

## 5th Session

*Purpose: Ideating, coming up with concrete recommendations*
*Outcome: Ideas and recommendations*

We are one step away from the end of the process. We have aligned on a clear goal and the systemic barriers we want to tackle, we have identified the critical shifts needed for such change to happen, we can now move into the ideation phase: define the recommendations, proposals, projects, outputs we want to see implemented.

The final phase (after this session) will include drafting an action plan: what activities every individual will commit to, what the group needs to do, what we need other ecosystem players to do. We had decided that this last step would happen in an in-person meeting (more on this later).

In this fifth session we split again up in the same breakout groups as the previous meeting, to continue working on our Miro board, moving from Critical Shifts to Ideas.

We started with 10 minutes of solo brainstorming, where everyone thinks alone and writes on post-its concrete ideas or recommendations to achieve each shift. They can focus on any shift they wish and share as many ideas as they want. We are again in *diverging* phase: the more ideas the better. For the next 30 minutes the group reads the ideas, clusters them and discusses. Finally, we vote and prioritize three final recommendations to focus on.

> *Hints*
>
> - In this exercise we need to get very specific! For instance, in our case it was important to mention the target group (who needs to do what?) or identify who could help clarify or concretize one idea, if we don't know enough about a specific topic (e.g., on some specific policies). Recommendations need to be doable, measurable and potentially make a big difference.

## 6th Session

*Purpose: Finalize recommendations & align on an in-person meeting*
*Outcome: Recommendations draft document*

The last online meeting of the process generally serves to recap the journey done so far, ensure there are some concrete conclusions and next steps outlined, and build excitement for the final steps. In our case, we had arranged an in person gathering to finalize the specific output of our collective work: the recommendation paper and the next steps to make those ideas a reality. If you are not meeting in person, it is important to close the process with clear tasks and next steps for everyone and agree on when and who organizes the follow-up meetings.

Prior to this session, our team had created an outline of our recommendation paper, split into the topics of the four groups, using their work and notes. We presented it during the call and used one hour to work on them in groups: adding feedback, ideas or clarification inputs.

Besides direct insights on the working document, it is an opportunity to harvest:

- Who else we need to engage in the next phase? (e.g., Policy experts)
- Who from the group is taking on a specific responsibility? (e.g., Taking up one recommendation and working on it with the relevant stakeholders)
- What is the role of Ashoka now going forward? (e.g., Spreading the recommendation document through our Policy Unit)

The end of this first phase generally means the start of a wider engagement of the participants. This meeting is needed to clarify that, from now on, Ashoka will have a less direct role and will become a stakeholder like them, using our influence to create the impact we have agreed on. Participants in this process also take on this same role and commit to concrete next steps. In our case, we had one more key in-person event, where we hoped to finalize recommendations, have a Validation session with the sector, and outline next steps for the implementation phase.

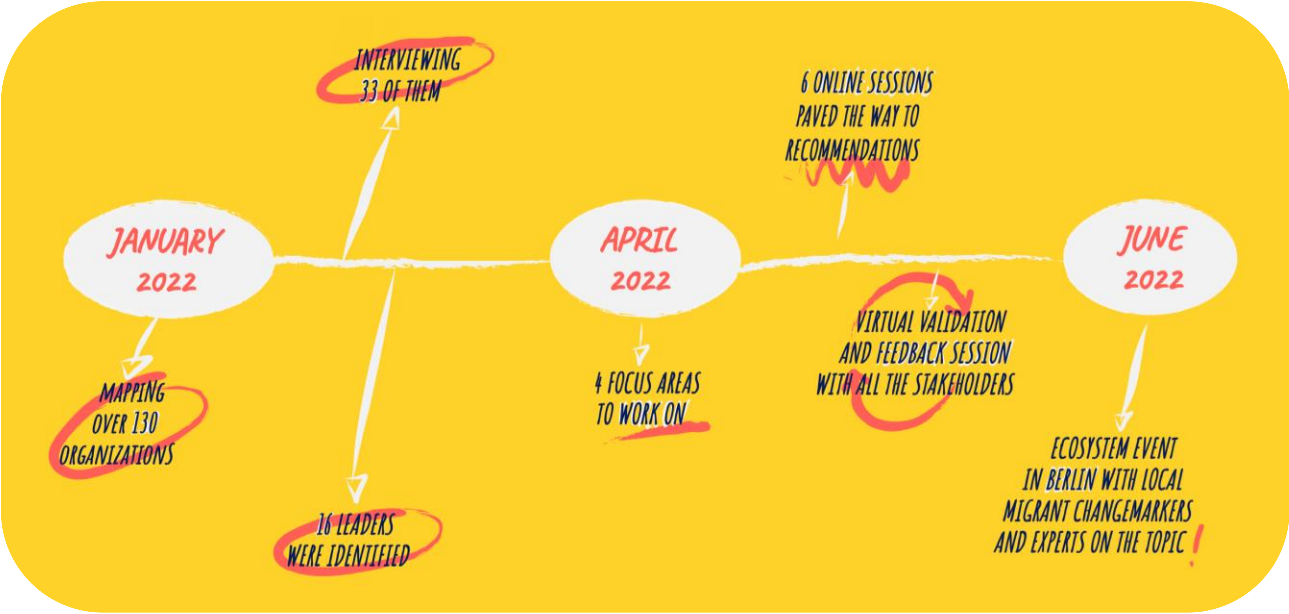
> *Hints*
>
> - Some tensions here might arise on how perfect and final the recommendations (or whatever output) need to be. A suggestion here would be to take on a “good enough” policy. Ask the group: is this good enough for what we need now? The work will be further developed in the following weeks and more people can be engaged to provide feedback or more details.

### *Templates*

- Agendas of all sessions
- All prep material for sessions: incl. slides, scripts and guidelines, recordings
- All drawings from the Artist
- All follow-up emails to sessions
- Validation Session material

### *Other Resources & Tools*

- [Connected to calls 1 & 2] Tools for systems mapping:
  - Problem Tree Analysis from Ashoka
  - 5R Framework and Targeted Systems Change from Ashoka
  - 5 System Mapping Methods from CoCreative
- [Connected to call 3] Tools to foster Collaboration & Alignment on a shared goal:
  - 12 Tools to Foster Alignment & Collaboration
  - Aligning on a shared goal from the Multistakeholder Collaborations course from Ashoka and CoCreative (including MAST Goal and Focus&Frame exercises).
- [Connected to calls 4 and 5] Ideation phase:
  - Critical Shifts & Interventions detailed explanation from the Multistakeholder Collaborations course from Ashoka and CoCreative
  - Methods to prioritize critical shifts
  - Methods to prioritize a set of ideas and concrete actions



# 6. In-person meeting & Validation session

*Purpose: Deep connections, drivers of concrete actions and validation by a larger ecosystem*
*Outcome: Finalized recommendations, next steps and who carries them*

After the online sessions, we bring the group together in person for a 2-day gathering, designed to create spaces for (1) working intensely as a group to produce tangible outputs, (2) connecting deeply and identifying implementation teams, (3) facilitating a trustful and open dialogue with involved funders and corporate leaders about funding for implementation, and (4) engaging a larger group within the ecosystem to validate and share early results, which also motivates and encourages the participants. We define the objectives and design the agenda with an external facilitator, with the design team co-facilitating.

## Objectives

The agenda aims to take people through a carefully planned journey that strikes a balance between connecting with each other while also producing tangible outcomes. Whereas it generally taps more into people's intellects, it also includes activities that speak more to the heart and body.

*Day 1:*

- Connect and bond as a group as the basis for creating synergies and collaboration.
- Refine and finalize the critical shifts and recommendations, and collectively brainstorm ideas for actions in order to make them a reality.

*Day 2:*

- Finalize the "Who" of the concrete actions we suggest to achieve the critical shifts and recommendations, as the basis for identifying what the group feels (a) they themselves want to drive, (b) what the backbone structure may look like and who will be a part of it and/or (c) what other stakeholders in the broader ecosystem should be involved and what they need to do.
- Discuss and explore everyone's future involvement, and the idea of a backbone organization to drive phase 2 of the effort.
- Validate and discuss the recommendations and suggested actions with stakeholders from the specific ecosystem and broader networks (in this case, the sector of migrant entrepreneurship and employment).

In the case of Hello Europe, and due to circumstances beyond our control (the Covid-19 pandemic during the first part of the process), this was the first in-person gathering for the group. Therefore we dedicated a significant amount of time to connecting and bonding exercises before going into refining the recommendations and defining actions. That was enforced further by hosting a group dinner on Day 1. On Day 2 we continued with deriving concrete actions but also invited participants to reflect on their own capacity to collaborate and commit. In the last block, each group prepared a brief presentation on a flipchart of their recommendations and actions to present during the Ecosystem Meetup (validation session). That worked well as the design team kicked off the event, then two participants introduced the process and their experience in it, and finally we organized two rounds of feedback where participants joined one of 4 working stations. In every round, each station hosted by participants from our group introduced their recommendations and actions and invited new inputs while collecting them on their flipchart. Those flipcharts then served as the key resource for our recommendation paper.

## *Templates*

- Agenda & facilitation tips
- Logistics (location, equipment)

- Emails to participants (logistics, nominations for validation)
- External validation invites
- Survey template

*Hints*

**Logistics:**

- Leverage the funders and corporate leaders and explore the possibility to be hosted by them/your partner.
- Engage Ashoka's local team to support the planning of the event, share invitations and be present during the Ecosystem Meetup.
- Consider supporting participants by covering their travel expenses (you can set maximum reimbursement quotas, create a sponsorship model where a participant from a private sector pays for expenses of a non-profit, etc.).
- Consider arranging catering by a company led by someone from an underrepresented community.
- Don't forget to document all the flipcharts and notes.
- Take pictures, videos, and collect media consent.

**Facilitation:**

- Involving an external facilitator has pros and cons. It takes the group to adjust to a new voice and experience from the online sessions, knowledge of the past conversations and dynamics disrupts the consistency, but it brings fresh perspectives, drive and focus on our objectives.
- Plan enough time for briefing the design team. We recommend dedicating enough time for this team to bond before the event, with focus time to go over the agenda and understand individual roles.

**Funders roundtable:**

- Consider organizing a small gathering for funders and corporate partners during the event. Lunch on Day 2 can be a good chance for you to ask them for open feedback and an intimate conversation about the future and potential funding opportunities.

**Validation session/ecosystem meetup:**

- Before the event, have a couple of slides ready (about the project, the process, the drawings that have emerged).
- Consult with the group and your main partner how to frame the event. We had our partner expressing concerns about calling the ecosystem event a validation session as it felt too binding, therefore we called it a meetup and chose a less formal tone.
- Defining the flow and content of the event with the group on the spot is stressful and requires improvisation, but it also brings excitement and allows bringing the latest developments from the workshops and for the participants to step up. Make sure you invite your participants to take lead and co-create it you, reflecting on their inputs.

## 7. Drafting the Recommendations Paper

*Purpose: Capture the process and the ideas and recommendations developed during the Accelerator.*
*Outcome: A comprehensive paper with strong recommendations to be shared with a wider audience.*

Creating a recommendations paper capturing 6 months of in-depth conversations can be challenging and requires a well-structured and collaborative approach. This document will be the most valuable product to communicate the results of the process and present the recommendations intended to shape future discussions and policies in the field. Here are some hints to help guide the process, ensuring a high-quality end-result based on our learnings.

*Hints*

**Establish clear roles and processes:**

- Identify a team member to lead the draft process, working closely with potential co-authors.
- If the team's capacity is strained, consider involving an external writer, academic, or someone from a global team.
- Allocate a budget at the project's outset to facilitate this and other potential external contributions, enhancing the paper's structure and quality.
- Assign another team member to take thorough notes during discussions to preserve valuable contributions.

**Simultaneous writing and discussion:**

- Establish a realistic timeline for the draft process. Avoid delaying the writing process until the end; write concurrently with discussions.
- Ensure that important insights are promptly incorporated into the document for comprehensive coverage.
- Gather relevant readings and academic perspectives during the initial writing phase to build a solid foundation.
- Incorporate visual elements such as charts, graphs, and images to enhance the report's readability and communicate complex information more effectively. Work with a graphic designer for the report layout.
- Include a concise executive summary at the beginning of the report, summarizing key findings, recommendations, and the overall purpose of the document.
- Use inclusive language throughout the report to reflect diverse perspectives and ensure that the document resonates with a broad audience.

**Active participation and feedback:**

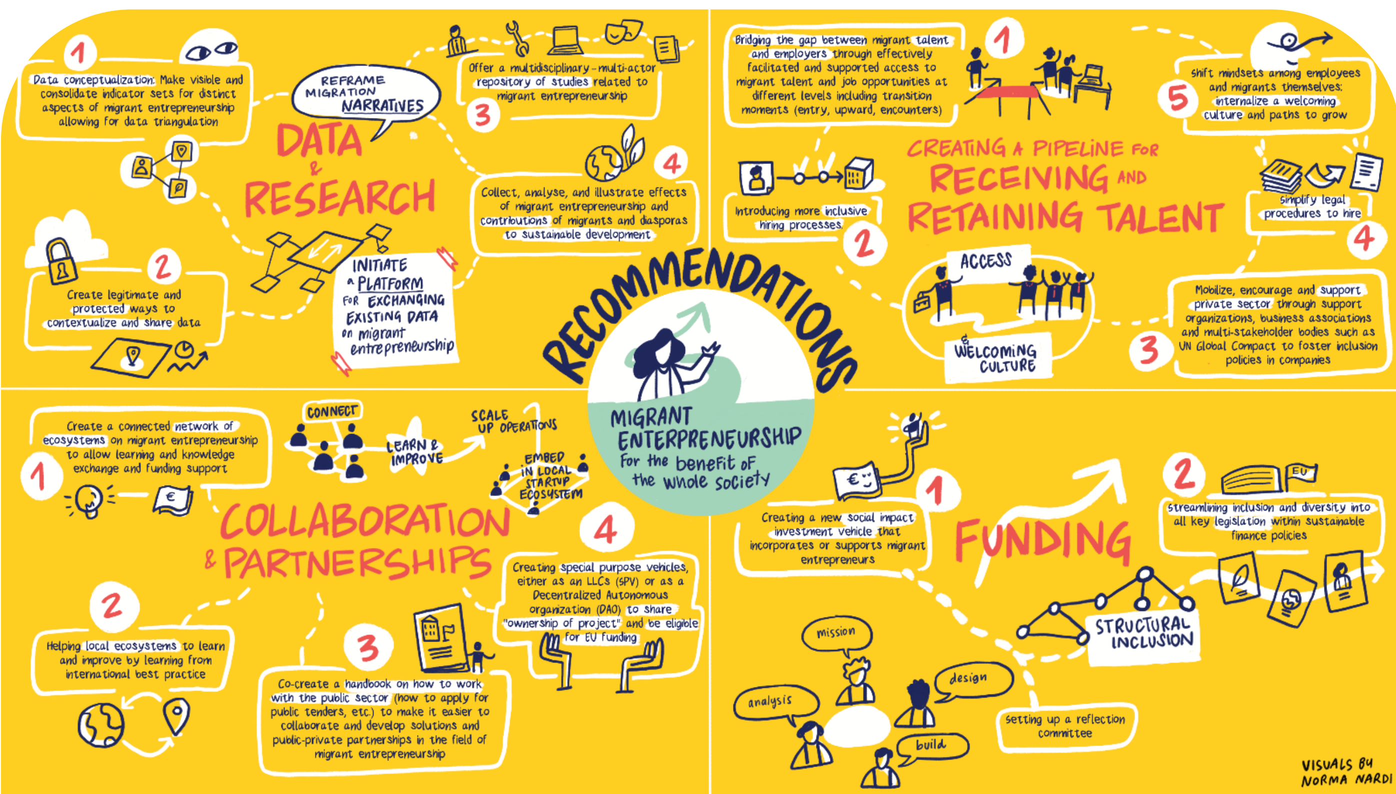
- Foster a collaborative writing effort that reflects participants' ownership of generated ideas.
- Encourage an iterative process by seeking feedback from team members throughout the draft phase.
- Share drafts with participants, urge them to fill in missing information and provide feedback for a truly collaborative effort.
- Establish a shared understanding of participants' roles in shaping the content and clearly communicate the paper's objectives to all participants.

**Dissemination and outreach:**

- Develop a plan for post-release engagement. Consider ways to maintain momentum after the report's publication, such as organizing follow-up events, webinars, or discussion forums.
- Create a landing page with information about the initiative and where the report will be published.
- Prepare a media toolkit, including a press release, social media posts and visuals to make its dissemination easier.
- Plan one or two launch events, in person and online, to present the report with relevant stakeholders and invite the authors of the report and accelerator participants.
- Send personalized emails with the report to key stakeholders and partners.

## *Resources*

- Final report
- Executive Summary
- Launch event recording



## 8. How the Accelerator developed

After finalizing the recommendation paper (download here), we brought the group together one more time to share our progress, collect their plans for dissemination or implementation and, as Ashoka Hello Europe, commit to:

- Organize an online launch session (recording here).
- Represent the results in various events (such as the REN Summit in Venice and Ashoka Changemaker Summit in Brussels).
- Be available for consultation of emerging efforts (migrant talent taskforce, backbone organization).

All these activities are co-created with key leaders from the group who take the stage with us, and some also committed to represent the team in other forums, gatherings and conferences. We also leveraged our learning internally, engage with various teams at Ashoka (Talent, Changemaker Companies, DEI and regional teams) to share insights from the process and from the field.

### Impact we are already seeing

One year after the end of Phase I, we organized an online reunion session where participants share how they keep building on this experience, reflecting on their learning.

There is a **consortium of Fellow organizations and policy experts** (Singa, StartUp Migrants, Migration Policy Group) that are building a backbone organization to influence decision-makers in Brussels in Migrant Entrepreneurship.

Ashoka has been leading a **migrant talent workforce with social entrepreneurs and global corporations** (Steelcase, Zalando, etc.) to create a sense of belonging at workplace for all and encouraged others to follow their example, including a series of events with corporate leaders.

As a result of their participation in the process, **thought leaders from the academic and social innovation sectors are stepping up to champion new narratives** around migration, leading European wide projects (Enter2Transform) and mobilizing their peers through events and research papers that develop key aspects of all people on the move being seen as changemakers.

Global communities of practitioners like Refugee Entrepreneurship Network (REN) are **turning to Ashoka to understand how to lead multi-stakeholder collaborations** and seeking guidance from our team.

Thanks to this work, **major funders are shifting their mindset.** It shows when some like Steelcase, TMF Group and Unilever are piloting projects with migrant talents, others like The Human Safety Net and Visa Foundation are investing in multi-stakeholder initiatives with city governments and convening other funders through their REN Corporate Leaders Forum to create new mechanisms to provide financial tools for migrant entrepreneurs jointly.

# 9. Conclusions and learning

In this final chapter we would like to focus on the conclusions and practical questions that arise when we think about how to make this process sustainable and what to keep in mind when you decide to replicate it for your context.

## How to make it sustainable?

It is extremely important to have the right partner for a collective impact project like this. We were able to pilot this first ecosystem accelerator thanks to a long-standing partnership with Zalando based on mutual trust and courage. They allowed us to listen to our intuition, experiment and adapt the process on an ongoing basis, open to follow the direction dictated by the group. Learn more about the partnership in Hello Europe final report created for Zalando here.

We recommend paying special attention to funders and corporate leaders from the beginning, helping them understand their role within the ecosystem and seeing the value in being part of the process as they are often overlooked. We organized a funder's event as part of our mapping process (invitation and event outline here), as a result, 3 people from this stakeholder group joined the full process and several others as observers (in the form of individual check-ins with the design team, validation sessions, etc.).

Creating space for a dialogue among them can help develop strong allies. During our in-person event we facilitated a smaller informal gathering with participating corporate leaders from 3 companies/foundations to strategize with them on potential future support of the emerging collaborative projects, but also to get feedback on how to present an Ecosystem Accelerator as a product to funders (our initial pitch deck here).

In general, such complex and unpredictable collective processes – like the one this toolkit described - offer the perfect opportunity to apply Ashoka's mindset shifting approach to funding. We need funders to embark on a long and systemic journey with us and other ecosystem players, and we are best positioned to gain their trust and show the power of the new funding paradigm: one that values trust over control, learning over evaluating, adapting over planning, and emergence over predictability, that cherishes indirect impact, that acknowledges that deep transformations take time, that seeks transformational over transactional relationships. Useful resources and narratives can be found here.

> **At the moment of publication, the Hello World team is among 6 finalists for the DeGroof Petercam Foundation Award for this project (a winner will be awarded by 1M€ prize), in conversations with global leaders of IOM to apply this approach in their innovation strategy, and in final stages of a proposal for IKEA Social Entrepreneurship to roll out 2 ecosystems accelerators in 2024. Related materials to be found here.**

## Hints

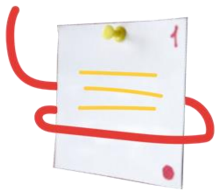
- Carefully select your partners and make sure they are open to collaboration and willing to let go of full control. We recommend setting this up as a multi-funder project.
- Define a clear role for them and different levels of engagement which can be reflected, for instance, in their financial contribution or the number of leaders from their organization involved. Try to understand well their expectations and motivation.
- Ask for financial contribution, even if it's symbolic: this will ultimately increase their commitment and allow you more flexibility in budgeting.
- If possible, try to secure funding partners to commit resources for Phase II (seed funding for collaborative projects emerging from the project, support for knowledge and stories dissemination, sponsorship for participating in events). You can get creative and form a review board to award projects to win a monetary prize, and their leaders might be able to support the implementation phase with mentorship or expertise of their departments or leverage their channels for communication.
- Use the Ecosystem Accelerator to surface candidates for Fellowship, or innovation principles, identify thought leaders for a long-term engagement and with potential to become Jiujitsu partners for Ashoka's purposes or other strategic work. Consider formalizing that in an advisory board.

## What are our lessons learned?

There is much learning we acquired from leading the process. When launching the Ecosystem Accelerator 2.0 we recommend making small adaptations in the design, co-creation and staff composition to allow a greater impact of the collective effort.

(1) ***Kick-off with an in-person meeting:*** Sharing a physical space allows a group to bond quicker, to learn more about their individual work and their own ambitions, strengths and limitations before entering the collective. Consider organizing a larger community event (like a festival) to surface potential participants, topics and priority ecosystems to accelerate impact in.

(2) ***Ownership, shared leadership and sub-teams:*** The key success factor of this process is to have a good compilation of the group members and a design team that drives the process but actively listens. When possible, engage a leader from the group early in the process to contribute to discussions of the design team throughout. You can either identify this leader yourself and be transparent about it to the group, or he/she can emerge naturally from the group during the process. You might see that as you start converging, some participants will tend to go deeper in a specific topic: encourage that and intentionally build smaller sub-teams which can then carry out the work beyond Phase I. Don't do this too soon, to not miss out on the full picture.



*(3)* ***Timeline and staff capacity*****:** Don't underestimate the complex skills, time capacity and expertise of staff that you need to run an Ecosystem Accelerator. Based on our experience we would recommend this timeline:

- 3 months: Mapping (database, first event, interviews)
- 3 months: Problem & Ideation (online and in-person sessions)
- 2 months: Acting (knowledge product/strategy/collaborative project plan)
- 3 months: Share & Influence (dissemination and events mobilizing others)

Be diligent about documenting your work, allow time for the team to align well and have regular spaces for reflection and feedback. Consider clarifying your fundraising strategy, governance, and engagement strategy for participants and the larger network before launching the process.

Hire an artist (scriber) for visualization for the group and communications purposes. This person should join the online sessions and capture key discussions live during the meetings.

*(4)* ***Implementation phase*****:** Our pilot and the design team only committed to Phase I. Only 2 team members continued supporting the emerging projects and disseminating knowledge later, because it became much more specialized and outside of the scope of work (and time capacity) of other staff members. This second phase, however, has a huge potential. It's important to consider Ashoka's role here, and where we positioned in order to be as effective as possible, thinking of the scope, prototype, and type of work needed in this phase.

*(5)* ***Measuring impact and securing sustainable funding*****:** Due to the nature of such efforts, it is difficult to predict exact deliverables, as well as a precise timeline and the direction where the groups will go. This complicates setting impact metrics and makes fundraising difficult (partners tend to want to know exactly what a project will produce). This is why our pilot failed to secure funding to continue to Phase II, and it took a year to be able to showcase the impact we created. After not being able to find a shared project in 2022, at the end of 2023 pitched a new version of our project to funders that were engaged throughout the process (at their request). After long conversations and thinking through possibilities, it now feels like we finally have a clear proposal for them to fund (e.g., IKEA Social Entrepreneurship, The Human Safety Net). However, we still feel gaps in our ability to measure and share impact in a way that is understandable and, importantly, fundable!

## How you can replicate this work and apply it to your strategies

One of Ashoka's main learnings of 40+ years driving the social entrepreneurship sector is that deep, long-lasting, transformational systems change requires collaboration. Over the past years, we have wagered on the power of gathering leading changemakers driven by a common goal, and we have tested different methodologies and approaches to facilitate their collective work. Several promising initiatives have emerged from such spaces. A few examples that were birthed in Europe recently include large-scale collectives like the Bioregional Weaving Labs, smaller scale initiatives initiated by groups of Ashoka Fellows around the Gender and Health purpose fields, as well as ecosystem-related initiatives like Changemaker Europe, Funding Systems Change, and Reframing International Development in collaboration with Ashoka East Africa.

Through these and many other initiatives and pilots, Ashoka gained experiences that were consolidated in learning journeys at the service of Ashoka staff and community members who want to strengthen their capacity to design and facilitate processes that make collaborative changemaking more effective, integral and systemic. In particular, a critical tool for many of them has been the learning journey on Leading Multi-Stakeholder Collaborations, built in partnership with CoCreative. While a new **facilitated journey** is currently (FY24) being implemented for selected existing collective initiatives in our community (information here), Ashoka Europe's One Community is currently – as we write – working on an updated **self-paced course**, for anyone eager to learn more about all the tools, processes and mindsets we usually take for granted in creating diverse and inclusive collaborative spaces that lead to systemic change. Additionally, the team is designing other **spaces for staff and close community members to share learnings and exchange experiences**.

To be the first one to know about all these opportunities, you can sign up to the Community Pulse Newsletter or stay in touch with the One Community team. For specific opportunities around the Hello World emerging purpose, sign up for our Quarterly here.

*Hints*

These types of collective processes offer a successful engagement pathway for Jujitsu Partners and can serve as a tool to advance our metro area work. If you would like to apply them to your work, please reach out and exchange learnings and experiences with us!

## Contact details

**If you want to embark on a similar journey, want to replicate the ecosystem accelerator approach, fundraise for this, or simply have a question or a suggestion, please reach out to ELLA GONCAROVA from Hello Europe.**

HELLO EUROPE

an initiative by: ASHOKA

&

ASHOKA EUROPE COMMUNITY