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SEE ME IN: SOCIAL INNOVATION FLOWS THROUGH CREATIVITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF MULTICULTURAL BUSINESSES

Milan, 16th June 2022 - They have created a fashion line, opened a restaurant and used design as means of expression. Their objective was one and the same: they all wished to set up a multi-cultural business outside their home country and reach out to the country welcoming them, trying to unite the two cultures.

As of today, these budding entrepreneurs have a new tool. A flexible intercultural HUB will deliver everything they need to grow their business, ranging from information about local legislation and financial pointers to practical advice in marketing and in human resources. The HUB for entrepreneurs was created within the SEE ME IN project (<https://interehub.eu/>), and its purpose is to empower businesses set up in the city by people born outside the European Union and legally resident in an EU country. These businesses are often unable to reach their full potential, whether through language barriers, cultural differences or administrative hiccups, and are not sufficiently competitive on the market.

By putting in place a new technological support network and testing new relationships and services, the project intends to give companies with an intercultural background the tools to initiate a process of innovation on par with that of SMEs founded by European entrepreneurs.

Coordinated by Fondazione Politecnico di Milano, the initiative has involved ten partners from five countries in Europe (Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Slovenia). In Italy, these are the City of Milan and the Cooperative Group CGM.

Apart from the online platform, a group of multi-cultural entrepreneurs were offered face-to-face training, webinars were organised among companies, established businesses passed on knowledge and information and there were events open to the public. This programme of initiatives helped to expand the network of companies and promote social cohesion in the cities taking part in the project. Other outcomes underlining its success are a book of recipes, showing how food can be the medium to talk about oneself and one's work, and a video giving a voice to six women who design fashion, where they talk about their passion and their experience as businesswomen.

“This project is a true example of international collaboration and cooperation, a topic firmly in the sights of Milan and this city government. It is also mentioned explicitly in the Pact for Employment. The section on ‘Milan, city of opportunities’, refers to knowing how to implement policies to receive and help those who arrive from abroad to set up a business in our city. This project combines different aspects, all of which are virtuous. Technological innovation to simplify. Education to share experiences, cultural as well as professional. The development of small foreign companies as the key to tangible social inclusion”, explained Alessia Cappello, Council member for Economic Growth and Employment Policies at the City of Milan.

“We are extremely proud to have set up an open platform and a support network through the SEE ME IN project. From today, they will give that extra help to people who have already started their multi-cultural business and those wishing to do so. At Fondazione Politecnico di Milano, we believe that innovation is first and foremost dialogue between skills, regions and people. We are also proud of our responsibility in supporting projects with a positive social impact that can create virtuous, creative and multi-cultural



connections and relaunch an exciting new entrepreneurship”, said Manuela Pizzagalli, Chief Operating Officer, Fondazione Politecnico di Milano.

“Business-making is an adventure, a journey through sometimes calm, sometimes rough waters. It is getting harder to do everything alone, which is why we thought we could be at the side of businesses set up by people who arrived here as immigrants, extending the model of social enterprises, especially social cooperatives. This model of collaboration has grown over the years, backed by the network, the meetings and the sharing of knowledge. Social enterprises started out and developed as entrepreneurs searched for new sectors, new ideas and new collaborations. We have learnt from experience that collaboration and sharing is the only route for more at-risk businesses to find new opportunities, and so we too started out on a new journey”, added Sabrina Bellione, Manager for European Planning at CGM.

Download the recipe book [here](#). Watch the fashion video [here](#).

Attached are the stories of several multi-cultural businesses.

SEE ME IN receives funding of 1.7 million euros from the Interreg Central Europe Programme 2014-2020 through ERDF funds. The project is coordinated by Fondazione Politecnico di Milano and includes the City of Milan, the Cooperative Group CGM, the School of Advanced Social Studies in Nova Gorica, the ACT Group, West Pannon Regional and Economic Development Public Nonprofit Ltd, the Budapest Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Aiforia GmbH, the Regional Development Agency of Northern Primoska Ltd and Nova Gorica, Iskriva-Institute for Development of Local Potential.