

# Hello Europe

A guide to design and implement  
an accelerator for impactful,  
citizen-led solutions.

**HELLO  
EUROPE**

an initiative by:



# HELLO EUROPE



Ashoka Hello Europe is an initiative designed and launched by Ashoka in 2016 in co-creation with key partners such as Zalando, the Robert Bosch Foundation, and the Schöpflin Foundation. Since its creation, Hello Europe has run 11 accelerators, engaging the ecosystems of 14 different countries across Europe, supporting over 90 solutions to design and launch scaling strategies.

Throughout our work, we have discovered what is needed to help social innovation initiatives scale, particularly to new country contexts, and developed effective strategies and tools to select impactful citizen-led solutions, match them with partners that can support their scaling effort and provide them with tailored mentoring support.

# ASHOKA



Ashoka is an international citizen sector organization founded in 1981 to identify and support the most innovative ideas for social change around the world. It coined the term 'social entrepreneur' and selects the Ashoka Fellows, unique leaders who design and drive these ideas forward, turning them from notions to organizations to global movements. With the social entrepreneurs as the motor for change, we strive to build a world where all people have the confidence and ability to become changemakers for the common good of all.

Over almost four decades, Ashoka has elected more than 3,500 Ashoka Fellows in over 90 countries, as well as young changemakers across the world. As it sources and selects brilliant social entrepreneurs in every sector, themes in their work begin to emerge, enabling a very unique position to identify those trends and keys to transform society at a systemic level.

# PARTNERSHIPS

The challenges underlying massive migratory movements cannot be solved by a single organization, nor can a single sector on its own provide the needed solutions. This makes it imperative to operate from a multi-sectorial approach, with partners who listen, learn and work closely with one another. Each contributes specific skills and resources: funding, consulting, expert advice, networks, space, and brilliant thinking. The result is an ecosystem that enables scaling the best solutions for migration throughout Europe.

## CO-FOUNDING PARTNERS:



## WITH INITIAL SUPPORT FROM:



Schöpflin Stiftung:

*For a list of all Hello Europe's partners, see:  
[www.hello-europe.eu/our-partners](http://www.hello-europe.eu/our-partners)*





# INTRODUCTION

## — Why an Accelerator?

Good ideas need to spread, and this is no less true of social innovation. Many citizen sector solutions are quickly scalable from one context (municipality, state, country) to another, and can produce amazing results. However, to scale more effectively, social innovators need better resources, incentives, knowledge and connections. Accelerators provide these to a group of organizations poised to scale.

## — The Hello Europe Accelerator

The Hello Europe Accelerator aims to help scale impactful, citizen-led initiatives that promote systemic solutions to different challenges underlying migration, refugee movements and integration. The accelerator helped speed up the process of scaling and enabled unanticipated and powerful collective impact solutions to emerge and connect with new stakeholders.

These kinds of accelerators generally run at a national level: identifying key problems needing innovation, and solutions from global and local contexts to invite to scale into that country. The philosophy and methodology can also be applied to build accelerators at regional or municipal levels, or even across a continent.

## — Solutions Selected and the Structure of an Accelerator

When we speak of solutions, we are referring to innovative organizations that are successfully addressing a specific root cause to the social challenge(s) the accelerator aims to address (in the case of Hello Europe, the overarching challenges were migration and asylum processes, integration and the migration narrative in Europe).

Criteria for identifying the innovative solutions should vary slightly from country to country depending on the specific needs, maturity of the sector and objective of the program. Generally, we found that it is better to select solutions that have been active for at least 2-3 years, have strong leadership who are able to participate fully in the program, adequately describe and measure their impact, addressing an issue in a systemic way, and have the capacity to scale.

Regardless of the topics it addresses and the context of implementation, an accelerator usually involves 3 phases, taking place over approximately one and a half years. On a general level, an accelerator aiming to grow the impact of innovative solutions needs to include the following steps:

### — 1. SELECT - SEARCHING, SOURCING AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Start by running workshops with key local stakeholders working in the field of interest, to understand the needs of the local ecosystem and how the program could best contribute. This is

also key to create demand for social innovation and ensure the solutions being selected address needs validated by the community. Select key solutions to the issue addressed by the accelerator, sourcing through global networks or among local entrepreneurs. Then, assess the needs and prepare the leaders of the selected solutions for scaling, through workshops, consulting, and other forms of support.

### — 2. SUPPORT - PRESENTING AND MATCHING

An accelerator needs to create space for inspiration and connection, where solutions can be presented to a large group of stakeholders (including local and international decision-makers, social entrepreneurs, business leaders, media, and government) and form connections and new networks that can enable the scaling or emergence of solutions. Ideally, it also includes some "scaling funding" to help organizations get started.

### — 3. SCALE - ONGOING ACCELERATION SUPPORT

An accelerator should provide tailored support to selected solutions that choose to scale. This includes workshops, pro-bono consulting through corporate partners, and access to new networks.



# PHASE 1: SEARCHING, SOURCING AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

6-9 MONTHS | 5-10 CITIZEN-LED ORGANIZATIONS ARE IDENTIFIED AND ENGAGED BY THE PROGRAM

## — 1. IDENTIFY LOCAL PROBLEMS THAT NEED SOLVING

Before launching the accelerator, it is essential to gather the major stakeholders and have them identify together the main challenges that need to be addressed in the field of intervention.

On the one hand, this **ensures that the accelerator addresses the true problems in the system** (rather than just inviting organizations that might look the most attractive) and **helps to build a demand for social innovation** among key actors in the field. On the other hand, it ensures higher probabilities for successful scaling, by selecting those that are the best fit for the problems identified.

### — USEFUL TOOLS

The Stakeholders Workshop is a one or two-day session in which the key stakeholders in the sector are invited to discuss the challenges in the ecosystem and their root causes. Tools from design thinking - such as empathy maps, user journeys, and stakeholder maps - are all useful to help mix participants together, see the issue from different angles, and go beyond a silo approach, in order to bring participants to realize how they must work together to provide effective collaborative solutions.

## THE ASHOKA NETWORK

Sourcing social entrepreneurs working on a specific topic is Ashoka's strength, as we can count on a world-wide network of over 3,500 Ashoka Fellows: leading social entrepreneurs selected in over 90 countries. For over 35 years, Ashoka has built and nurtured the largest network of social innovators in the world. Ashoka Fellows champion innovative ideas that transform society's systems, providing benefits for everyone and improving the lives of millions of people. After a rigorous selection process, they are introduced to a life-long fellowship, where every member is committed to championing new patterns of social good. Additionally, Ashoka has engaged in other programs that help develop and support social entrepreneurs at different stages.

## — 4. CARRY OUT IN-DEPTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT OR IMPACT TRANSFER PROGRAM WITH SELECTED SOCIAL INNOVATIONS

Once social innovations have been selected to join the program, it is vital to help them prepare to scale. **The social innovators should work through a series of questions to identify the specific impact that they are best positioned to scale.** Many social innovators have a general desire to scale, but have often not intentionally spent time assessing their model to identify what is the specific impact (vs. organizational structure) that they want to scale.

## — USEFUL TOOLS

Several questions need to be asked to the person leading the initiative - including the systemic impact he or she is aiming

to make, what his/her role is in that process, what kind of stakeholders are involved in the system and which ones does he/she need to work with, how will he/she measure success, etc. This brings into focus the actual impact they can achieve and need to scale. It can be an organization-changing exercise (and life-changing for many social innovators), so serious time and effort must be dedicated to this. ***The focus should always be on the impact and the diverse "vehicles" available to achieve this*** (e.g. franchises, collaborations, building networks of like-minded organizations, policy change, etc.), rather than focusing on becoming a certain kind of business model.

*"It's hard for someone like us coming from another part of the world, not just another country... it's hard to come to Europe and break through. Ashoka and Hello Europe, as well as the events helped us to understand that we are part of the ecosystem."*

DAVID LUBELL (SOCIAL INNOVATOR)

## POLICY AND NARRATIVE

An Accelerator can help bridge the gap between social innovators and the public and policy sectors, by connecting social innovators with policy makers. For that purpose, hosting conferences, engaging members of political institutions and developing communication channels that connect them to the community of social innovators are all important efforts.

An Accelerator can also help spread a narrative on the field of intervention that reflects the innovative and successful approaches identified. Valid strategies include spreading information on the solutions selected, or telling the stories of leaders in this sector to show how solutions are being developed. In the field of migration, for example, this is vital because part of the systemic problem in the sector is a narrative of migrants as passive subjects of pity instead of the changemakers that they are. By telling stories about changemakers and social innovators from a migrant, we contributed together to create narrative impact.



# PHASE 2: PRESENTING AND MATCHING – THE “HELLO FESTIVAL”

3 MONTHS | NEW OPPORTUNITIES TO COLLABORATE WITH STAKEHOLDERS ARE PROVIDED TO 5-10 SOLUTIONS

## — 1. ORGANIZE AN EVENT TO PRESENT THE SOLUTIONS

Social innovators, potential replicators and funders, media, migrant leaders and other stakeholders need to be brought together for an event where the solutions selected by the program are presented.

An event brings the social innovators and the key actors of the sector together in the same room, **enabling them to build relationships, propose partnerships, and get the “scaling” ball moving**. On the other hand, it sends a powerful message to society - both through the audience and through media coverage - regarding the Accelerator topic.

### — USEFUL TOOLS

The Hello Festival tends to be a one to two-day event, gathering between 150-300 people. It usually combines plenary sessions, where the general context for migration is given through speeches from experts, as well as panels from migrant leaders and pitch-sessions, during which social innovators give short presentations in a pitch-style regarding their solution.

The central event should also include deep-dive workshops

into social innovations and how they are planning to scale; or training workshops in key subjects that affect all participants.

## — 2. SUPPORT NETWORKING AMONG STAKEHOLDERS AND THE SOCIAL INNOVATORS

It is fundamental to provide plenty of networking time (preferably around food!) and organize 1-to-1 meetings before, after and in breaks during the event, to ensure the development of relationships among the innovators and key stakeholders. The ongoing relationships that emerge from the Hello Festivals are always essential for scaling purposes.

### — USEFUL TOOLS

The events included dedicated time for the participants to have informal conversations. 1-to-1 meetings were arranged by volunteers and staff from co-creating organizations, who had been trained to become connectors with the social innovators and other key stakeholders (making introductions, taking notes, etc.). In some cases, they were also tasked with enabling effective follow-up, to help very busy people keep the scaling process moving.

## — 3. PROVIDE INITIAL FUNDING

Scaling requires initial resources to be invested in pilot projects. Providing social innovators with seed scaling capital is often a key element to help them successfully kick off the scaling process.

### — USEFUL TOOLS

The Innovation Fund was created to raise capital for the social innovators to scale (or their replication partners). Often it can be opened to other partners, organizations and individuals for crowd-funding.

*“Presenting our organization in front of a big audience was a very good opportunity. The event had around 200 people, who were already interested in the topic of migration and integration, so it was very interesting for us. And then meeting other people who are trying to grow their projects and exchange knowledge and get to know them... I think that was very valuable.”*

**MARIANA BRILHANTE (SOCIAL INNOVATOR)**



# PHASE 3: ACCELERATION SUPPORT

3-6 MONTHS | THE SOLUTIONS DEVELOP OR ADVANCE IN THEIR SCALING STRATEGIES

## — 1. CONNECT THE SOCIAL INNOVATORS WITH PRO-BONO MENTORS BASED ON THE ASSESSED NEEDS

Once the solutions have been presented to key stakeholders and replicators or other supportive organizations have been identified, it is time to **provide tailored coaching to these initiatives.**

The general principle is to connect the social innovators with experts and pro-bono support to develop or refine their scaling strategy, and to continually check up on progress to see how to help to their evolving needs. Often, these mentors can also open doors to networks and other contacts that can support the scaling process.

## — USEFUL TOOLS

Ashoka's Globalizer team and their methodologies were essential in supporting the design and implementation. The Globalizer program was designed to help Ashoka Fellows reflect on key issues and establish a solid strategy to spread their impact globally. They have years of experience supporting social entrepreneurs to prepare their initiatives to scale globally, and do this by teaching, pairing them with experts and coaches, and bringing them together to feed off each other's experience.

## — 2. CONSIDER OTHER ORGANIZATIONS THAT OFFER THE KIND OF SUPPORT NEEDED

Often, the kind of support needed by social innovators is more readily available through other existing networks and organizations that are well-positioned to help the solutions to adjust their scaling strategy to the local context. Partnerships with these kinds of organizations can be very helpful to systematize the support and involve other ecosystem members.

*"The mentorship phase was one of the most interesting parts of the acceleration program. At the beginning, I was not very flexible about changing my strategy. But then, thanks to my mentor, I came to realize that a systemic approach could be an advantage."*

**MAMADOU LAMINE NDIAYE (SOCIAL INNOVATOR)**



<sup>1</sup> <https://mamaventure.it/>

# ANNEX I – CASE STUDY: MAMAVENTURE



**LEADER:**  
**MAMADOU LAMINE  
NDIAYE**

meet consumer demands. MamaVenture supports foreign citizens' entrepreneurship through an online platform, which allows operation across Italy.

## — Assessed needs

MamaVenture was nominated for the Hello Italy Accelerator during a mapping effort to source local social innovators in the Italian ecosystem. It was selected among 15

solutions who took part in the Hello Festival and, after a pitch session, was selected by a jury to take part in the mentorship program, together with 7 other solutions. Before Hello Europe, the aim of the organization was to invest in multiple initiatives, following the strategy to invest in startups. However, the scaling strategy of MamaVenture needed further definition. Additionally, as a recently established initiative, the organization could benefit from increased visibility and by building connections with high-level contacts.

## — How the accelerator helped

During the Hello Festival, Mamadou was involved in a pitch session to present MamaVenture to the public. Many of the stakeholders that were present followed up with new opportunities for the organization. Thanks to the involvement in Hello Europe, MamaVenture participated in the African Business Week and featured in the Fondazione ISMU's list of relevant social enterprises.

Throughout the mentorship program, Mamadou came to refine the scaling strategy of the organization, and eventually changed it significantly to orient it towards a systemic approach. With support from his mentors, Mamadou designed a strategy to scale MamaVenture not just in Italy -which was the initial plan - but also

abroad. MamaVenture is composed of two parts: a national division, which looks for entrepreneurial initiatives of second-generation migrants who are staying in the country where they were born or grew up; and international one, that focuses on first-generation migrants who want to support their country of origin through remittances. These people often save the remittances to later return to their country of origin and invest them. As a result, these savings often are wasted, because people who move back to their country of origin often do not know the sector they are aiming to invest in. MamaVenture now aims to map the entrepreneurial sector of developing countries and find partners in Italy that want to invest there, supporting local entrepreneurs. The final scaling plan took into account the set of stakeholders that could partner with MamaVenture for achieving the same purpose - which were not included in the previous strategy.

The program also provided Mamadou with helpful matches and connections. Through one of his mentors, Mamadou got in touch with people and organizations that are working with him in a current collaborative project.

# ANNEX II – CASE STUDY: SPEAK



LEADER:  
MARIANA  
BRILHANTE

to share cultural experiences and develop meaningful bonds. The project brings together locals and newcomers with the aim of creating a sense of belonging. It allows participants to facilitate informal language learning environments and host community events that engage beyond local migrant groups. Through this network, newcomers obtain access to informal recommendations as well as guidance with specific needs and integration challenges.

SPEAK<sup>2</sup> promotes the organic emergence of communities in which diversity is valued and cultures are shared in a safe space through peer-to-peer meetings. Locals, refugees and other migrants meet through an online platform and are invited

## — Assessed needs

SPEAK wanted to expand to Spain. They were invited to take part in the Hello Spain Accelerator, through their recent incorporation to the Ashoka network (Hugo became an Ashoka Fellow in 2018). The aim of the organization was to scale to Spain through a franchise model. During the initial phase of the accelerator, SPEAK's needs were assessed. In order to scale, the organization had to tackle the following challenges:

- » Find potential funders for SPEAK Spain;
- » Find someone who would be interested in leading SPEAK in Spain - i.e. with entrepreneurial skills, interested in the social dimension, and keen on starting something new that was not his/her own idea;
- » Build a pipeline of people interested, given that there was no brand awareness for SPEAK in Spain.

## — How the accelerator helped

In order to tackle SPEAK's challenge on funding, Hello Europe matched SPEAK with Open Value Foundation. This organization decided to fund SPEAK's replication in Madrid. Thanks to this funding, SPEAK could support a

person to start the project in Madrid.

During the event, Mariana could interact informally with other participants. This way, while having some tapas on the same day of the event, she got to know SINGA, another organization participating in the event, that works in a complementary area: SINGA<sup>3</sup> is a community of people who want to get to know and understand each other better and build a better society for themselves. The project develops a sense of community with migrants and local citizens, and as such helps further integration and change perspectives. The various programs of the organization across Europe aim to organize and facilitate opportunities to meet others within the community. SPEAK and SINGA leaders had the opportunity share their experiences and contacts.

Finding the right person to lead the SPEAK's replication in Spain was essential for the scaling strategy, and its first priority. After the event, Hello Europe kept providing SPEAK with new contacts. By continuing to open new doors, the accelerator helped SPEAK identify a person to start the project in Spain, according to the profile that they had created, and helped to raise awareness around the initiative. Additionally, Hello Europe supported this person to kick-off SPEAK in the city of Madrid, an important aspect of the scaling strategy of SPEAK in Spain.



<sup>2</sup> [www.speak.social](http://www.speak.social). Speak was founded by Ashoka Fellow Hugo Menino Aguiar, cf. [www.ashoka.org/es-es/fellow/hugo-menino-aguiar](http://www.ashoka.org/es-es/fellow/hugo-menino-aguiar)

<sup>3</sup> [www.singa-espagna.com](http://www.singa-espagna.com). Singa was founded by Ashoka Fellow Nathanaël Molle, cf. [www.ashoka.org/en-eg/fellow/nathanael-molle](http://www.ashoka.org/en-eg/fellow/nathanael-molle)



# ANNEX III – CASE STUDY: WELCOMING INTERNATIONAL



**LEADER:**  
**DAVID LUBELL**

Welcoming International<sup>4</sup> helps local communities adjust to and understand the benefits of demographic change. The project focuses on host community engagement; an approach that reduces anxiety and increases empathy among long-term residents in communities

experiencing rapid growth in migrant populations. The project helps communities go beyond the typical “seed-focused” approach, and direct significant attention to engaging the native-born population in those communities where refugees and other migrants settle.

## — Assessed needs

Welcoming International was selected first to take part in the Hello Germany Accelerator, through the sourcing process

from among the international network of Ashoka Fellows. David Lubell later participated in several editions of the program. For scaling to new European countries, Welcoming International had the following needs:

- » Understand the local context and learning about the local stakeholders operating in the field of migration;
- » Meet key public officials to connect with municipalities to scale the project to;
- » Find initial funding to kick off the pilots of the program in new countries.

## — How the accelerator helped

Through the accelerators, David Lubell gained knowledge of what his organization needed in order to scale to new local contexts. This was achieved through the coaching program and through events, where he felt engaged in the ecosystem. For Welcoming International, additionally, matchmaking with partners and grants provided through Innovation Funds were particularly helpful to start pilot projects in new country contexts.

During the Hello Germany Accelerator, Welcoming International was re-introduced to an organization that would become their partner to scale. The Hello Europe team's role was particularly

relevant in supporting the start of the conversation among Welcoming International and the future partners, as well as with the follow-up. Hello Europe also helped Welcoming International to scale to Germany by providing a grant through the Innovation Fund that was specifically dedicated to scaling the organization. The grant, together with the support provided by the mentorship program over the months following the central event, helped Welcoming International to kick off the first initial level of the pilot project.

Similarly, during the Hello Spain Accelerator, David met other stakeholders relevant for his organization's scaling strategy at the Hello Festival. Particularly, the Hello Europe staff supported the conversation between Welcoming International, the High Commissioner for Migration in Portugal and other participants, which later proved relevant for the scaling of the organization. Hello Europe also introduced David Lubell to Vicente Zapata, another social innovator selected by the program, leader of *Juntos en la misma dirección*<sup>5</sup>: an island management strategy for Tenerife, promoted by the University of La Laguna and the Cabildo de Tenerife. Through a wide range of activities based on an intercultural approach, this strategy aims at promoting social coexistence among the island's residents, 20% of which were born abroad. Vicente Zapata received a grant from the Hello Spain's Innovation Fund to support his project, and decided to use part of it to support Welcoming International to scale to Tenerife.