

SELF

Solo-entrepreneurship in post-pandemic Europe

Mapping and Extrapolating solo-entrepreneurship trends & features

ANNEX 2

Country Report Template

Country Snapshot Spain

Developed by: UMA/IWS

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Introduction

*Based on findings, please provide an overview on your report. Try to be as concise and straight to the point as possible.
(1 page max)*

Solo entrepreneurship stands as a dynamic and essential component of Spain's economic landscape, embodying the spirit of innovation, resilience, and diversity within the entrepreneurial ecosystem. In this country report, we present a comprehensive overview of solo entrepreneurship in Spain, drawing upon real and updated quantitative data up to 2023 to shed light on its historic evolution, spatial distribution, gender dynamics, and generational trends.

Through the lens of statistics, graphs, and diagrams, we navigate through the rich tapestry of solo entrepreneurship in Spain, uncovering insights into its economic significance, geographical nuances, and socio-demographic characteristics. These quantitative indicators not only provide a snapshot of the current state of solo entrepreneurship but also serve as a roadmap for understanding its trajectory and potential future directions within the Spanish entrepreneurial landscape.

In Spain, the educational landscape acknowledges the significance of entrepreneurship, incorporating relevant subjects predominantly at the university level. While many institutions offer training programs aimed at entrepreneurs, there is a noticeable variation in the emphasis placed on solo entrepreneurship, which often does not receive as targeted a focus as general entrepreneurial skills. Certain universities and business schools do provide specialized courses designed specifically for solo entrepreneurs, covering essential topics such as business planning and financial management. However, the national strategy, while supportive of entrepreneurship in general, does not distinctly prioritize solo ventures over other forms of entrepreneurial initiatives.

Challenges hindering the professional development of young aspiring solo entrepreneurs in Spain are multifaceted, stemming from both individual capability gaps and broader structural issues. Many young entrepreneurs lack crucial digital business skills and financial literacy, which are essential for managing a successful solo enterprise. Additionally, structural challenges such as the lack of supportive policies tailored to solo entrepreneurs and economic instability further complicate the landscape. These factors collectively create a challenging environment for young entrepreneurs, requiring comprehensive support systems that include targeted educational programs and policy initiatives designed to stabilize and nurture the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

In summary, while Spain has made strides in fostering solo entrepreneurship and self-employment through policy initiatives, there remains a need to address competence gaps among young aspiring entrepreneurs and provide targeted education and training programs to nurture digital readiness and business acumen. By prioritizing these areas, Spain can cultivate a vibrant ecosystem that empowers individuals to pursue entrepreneurship successfully and contribute to economic growth and innovation.

Quantitative indicators on solo entrepreneurship and self-employment in Spain

Based on findings, please provide for all the available quantitative indicators on solo entrepreneurship and self-employment in your country. Guiding points might be:

- *Historic evolution of the phenomenon (e.g., pre and post pandemic)*
- *Spatial distribution (i.e., per region, North VS South, etc.)*
- *Gender / generational connotations*
- *Statistics (insert graphs and/or diagrams): please insert any statistics you have available. If own generated, please insert the excel object (easy to translate if needed).*
- *Any other relevant quantitative reference*

Please always quote the source and list the source in the references (see also the bibliography file in Excel)

Based on our research conducted on updated data available up till 2023, the following quantitative data have emerged, providing a multifaceted overview of solo entrepreneurship in Spain. From examining its historic evolution, including pre and post-pandemic trends, to analysing its spatial distribution across regions and the nuanced gender and generational connotations, this section offers a detailed exploration of the solo entrepreneurship phenomenon.

In terms of historic evolution, it must be highlighted that before the pandemic, Spain witnessed a steady ascent in solo entrepreneurship, characterized by an annual increase of approximately 3% in the number of self-employed individuals from 2015 to 2019, as evidenced by data from the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE). During this period, the services sector emerged as the predominant domain for solo entrepreneurs, encompassing industries such as consulting, IT, and freelance services, closely followed by retail and construction.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic precipitated a downturn in solo entrepreneurship in 2020, marked by a 7% reduction in the number of self-employed individuals compared to the preceding year, according to data from the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration. However, the post-pandemic era ushered in a gradual recovery, with solo entrepreneurship rebounding to pre-pandemic levels by 2023. This resurgence was fuelled by innovation and adaptability, as solo entrepreneurs swiftly acclimated to evolving market conditions, leveraging digital platforms and remote work arrangements to navigate the economic challenges posed by the pandemic.

An analysis of spatial distribution reveals nuances in the prevalence of solo entrepreneurship across various regions of Spain. Urban centers such as Madrid, Catalonia, and Andalusia exhibit heightened concentrations of self-employed individuals, attributed to enhanced access to markets, networking opportunities, and infrastructural advantages. Conversely, rural regions contribute significantly to solo entrepreneurship, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and artisanal crafts, underscoring the diverse geographical footprint of solo entrepreneurship in Spain.

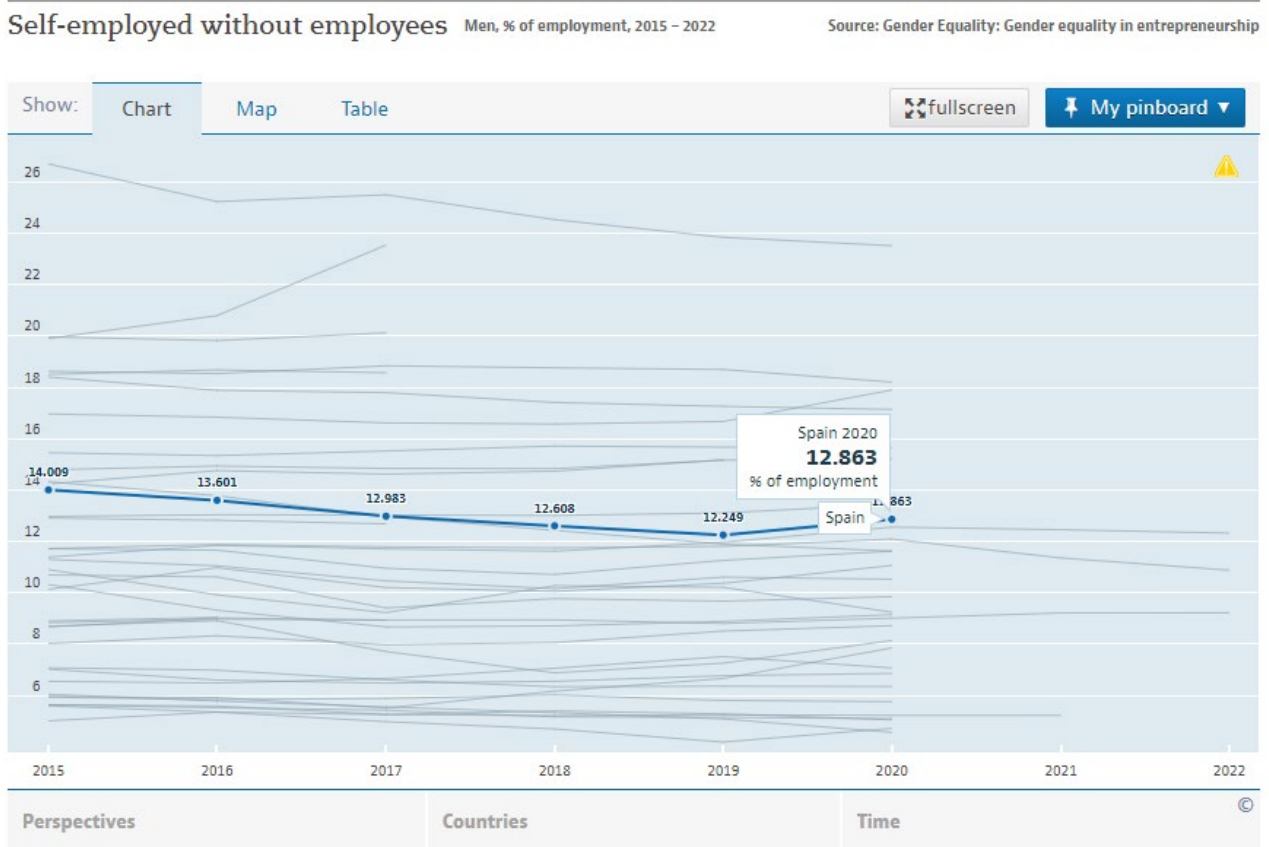
A discernible North-South economic divide is evident in the distribution of solo entrepreneurship. Northern regions like Catalonia, Basque Country, and Navarre boast higher levels of economic development and entrepreneurial activity, propelled by thriving industries such as technology, manufacturing, and finance. In contrast, Southern regions such as Andalusia, Extremadura, and Murcia contend with economic disparities and limited access to funding, fostering a more traditional business landscape.

Analysing gender and generational connotations, data from the INE underscores a gender imbalance among solo entrepreneurs in Spain, with approximately 60% being male and 40% female in 2023. This disparity

permeates various industries and age cohorts, reflecting broader societal inequities and barriers encountered by women in entrepreneurship.

Additionally, a significant proportion of solo entrepreneurs fall within the 30-50 age range, as highlighted by a study conducted by the Spanish research institution, Instituto de Estudios Laborales y Sociales (IELS), underscoring the diverse demographic composition of Spain's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Generationally, solo entrepreneurship in Spain exhibits distinctive trends across different age groups. Younger cohorts, notably millennials and Gen Z, gravitate towards solo entrepreneurship, leveraging digital platforms and technological innovations to establish start-ups and freelance ventures. Conversely, older generations, including baby boomers and Gen X, embrace solo entrepreneurship as a means of augmenting retirement income or transitioning from conventional employment to more flexible work arrangements.

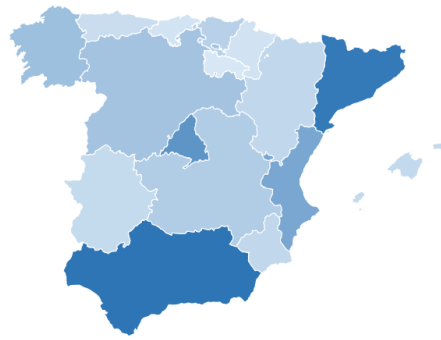
The following statistics provide visual insights into the historic evolution, spatial distribution, gender dynamics, and generational trends shaping solo entrepreneurship in Spain up to 2023. Complemented by additional quantitative data presented later in this section, including the number of solo entrepreneurs, economic contribution, growth rates, survival rates, and access to funding, they offer a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of solo entrepreneurship in Spain.



Graph 1: Evolution of Solo Entrepreneurship in Spain (2015-2022)

Data Source: OECD (2024), Self-employed without employees (indicator). doi: 10.1787/5d5d0d63-en (Accessed on 28 March 2024)

Regional Distribution of Solo Entrepreneurs in Spain (2023)



Num. of Solo Entrepreneurs

279893

1459



Con tecnología de Bing

© GeoNames, Microsoft, OpenStreetMap, TomTom

Graph 2: Regional Distribution of Solo Entrepreneurs in Spain (2023)

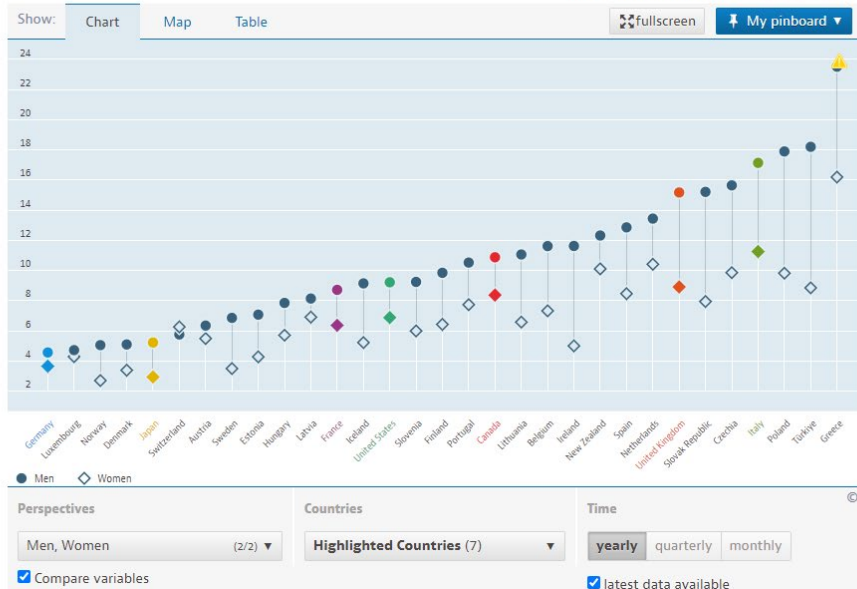
Source: MITES, 2023 (own elaboration)

Indicators

- ↳ Employees by business size
- ↳ Enterprises by business size
- ↳ Self-employed with employees
- ↳ Self-employed without employees
- ↳ Self-employed with tertiary education
- ↳ Self-employment by activity
- ↳ Starting a business
- ↳ Running a business
- ↳ Inventors
- ↳ Young self-employed

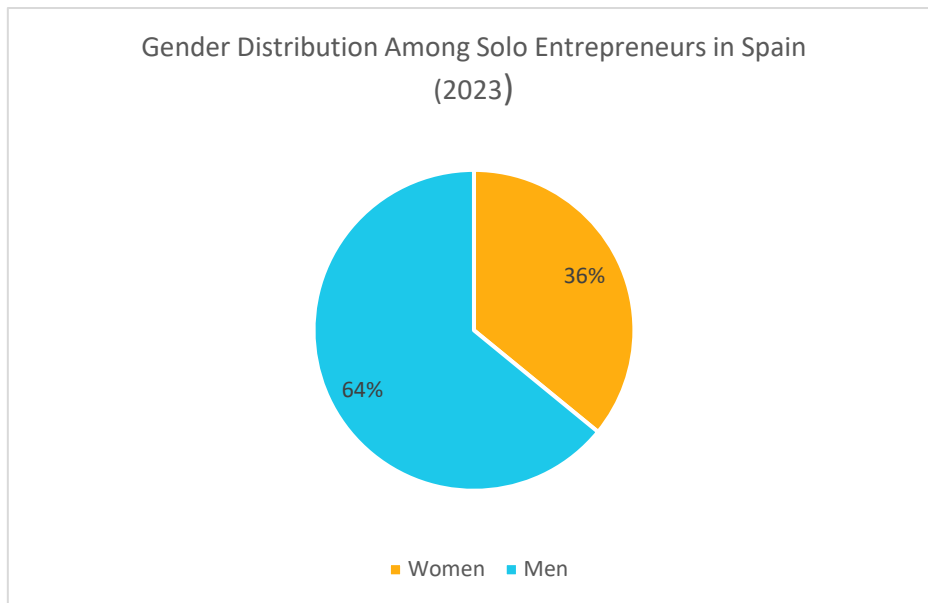
Self-employed without employees Men / Women, % of employment, 2022 or latest available

Source: Gender Equality: Gender equality in entrepreneurship

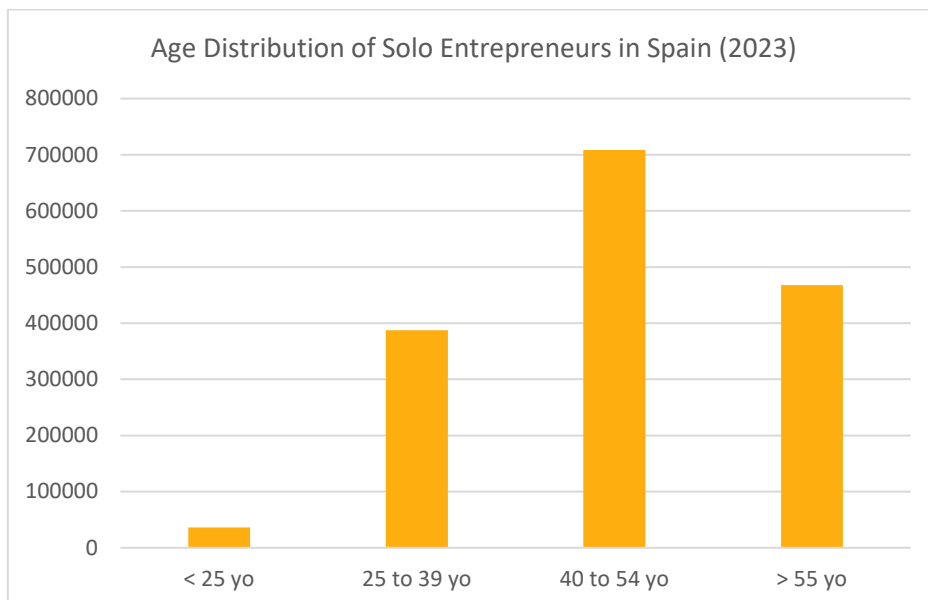


Graph 3a: Gender Equality in Self-Employed without employees in Spain (2022)

Data Source: [OECD \(2024\), Self-employed without employees \(indicator\). doi: 10.1787/5d5d0d63-en \(Accessed on 28 March 2024\)](#)



Graph 3b: Gender Distribution Among Solo Entrepreneurs in Spain (2023)
 Source: MITES, 2023 (own elaboration)



Graph 4: Age Distribution of Solo Entrepreneurs in Spain (2023)
 Source: MITES, 2023 (own elaboration)

As of 2023, the landscape of solo entrepreneurship in Spain reflects a resilient sector, with approximately 3.2 million individuals registered as self-employed or sole proprietors, according to data sourced from the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE). This figure marks a slight increase from the preceding year, underscoring the sector's ability to withstand the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and adapt to evolving market conditions.

Solo entrepreneurs constitute a vital force driving Spain's economy, contributing an estimated 11% to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2023. This significant economic impact, as reported by the Ministerio de Inclusión, Seguridad Social y Migraciones, underscores the indispensable role played by solo entrepreneurship in fostering economic growth, innovation, and job creation across diverse sectors.

In 2023, Spain witnessed a moderate year-over-year growth rate of 2.5% in the number of solo entrepreneurs, based on data compiled by Eurostat. This steady expansion signifies a stable recovery trajectory following the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting the resilience and adaptability of solo entrepreneurs in navigating challenging economic landscapes.

The services sector continues to serve as the primary domain for solo entrepreneurship in Spain, commanding a substantial share of 45% among all solo entrepreneurs in 2023, according to statistics provided by the INE. Retail and technology sectors follow closely, constituting 25% and 15% of solo entrepreneurship, respectively, indicating a diverse and dynamic entrepreneurial landscape across various industries.

Research conducted by a consortium of Spanish universities, including Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and Universidad Complutense de Madrid, indicates an average survival rate of 52% for solo entrepreneurial ventures after five years, as observed in 2023. Factors influencing the success or failure of these ventures encompass access to funding, prevailing market conditions, and effective business management practices.

Access to capital remains a persistent challenge for solo entrepreneurs in Spain, with only 35% of applicants receiving the full amount requested in 2023, as reported by the Spanish Banking Association (Asociación Española de Banca). Average loan sizes range from €10,000 to €50,000, with traditional banks serving as the primary source of funding for solo entrepreneurs, underscoring the need for enhanced financial support mechanisms tailored to the unique requirements of solo ventures.

The COVID-19 pandemic precipitated a temporary decline in the number of solo entrepreneurs in Spain during 2020, witnessing a 7% decrease compared to the previous year, as indicated by data from the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration. However, the pandemic also served as a catalyst for innovation and adaptation among solo entrepreneurs, prompting many to pivot towards digital platforms and remote service delivery models to mitigate the adverse effects of the economic downturn and emerge stronger in the post-pandemic landscape.

Nowadays, the trend appears to be heading in the right direction: according to a recent study by the Spanish Confederation of Young Entrepreneurs Associations (CEAJE), 30% of Spaniards want to start a business in the medium term (between one and five years), with Andalusia leading the ranking (where four out of ten express interests in entrepreneurship), followed by Madrid and Catalonia.

Qualitative indicators on solo entrepreneurship and self-employment in Spain: skills-gap and needs assessments

Based on findings, please provide for a qualitative description of the solo entrepreneurship and self-employment' phenomenon in your country. In here please make sure to highlight:

- *Policy priorities in the field, if any*
- *Competence gaps of young aspiring solo entrepreneurs*
- *Education and training areas of interest to nurture the digital readiness and business acumen of aspiring self-employed people*

In this section you are kindly asked to provide us with clear competences' gaps and training needs that WP2 lead will look into to fill-in the learning outcomes matrix

Please always quote the source and list the source in the references (see also the bibliography file in Excel)

In Spain, the phenomenon of solo entrepreneurship and self-employment is influenced by various qualitative indicators, including policy priorities, competence gaps among young aspiring solo entrepreneurs, and areas of interest in education and training to nurture digital readiness and business acumen.

Policy initiatives in Spain aimed at fostering solo entrepreneurship and self-employment primarily focus on creating an enabling environment for business formation, providing support services, and facilitating access to funding and resources. Initiatives such as tax incentives for startups, streamlined regulatory processes, and the establishment of entrepreneurship support centers aim to encourage entrepreneurial activity and remove barriers to entry.

Additionally, there is a growing emphasis on promoting social entrepreneurship and sustainability, with policies aimed at incentivizing businesses that have a positive social or environmental impact. This aligns with broader European Union (EU) objectives for sustainable economic development and social cohesion.

One notable challenge faced by young aspiring solo entrepreneurs in Spain is the competence gap in essential entrepreneurial skills. While many possess technical expertise in their chosen field, they may lack proficiency in areas such as business management, marketing, financial planning, and networking. Furthermore, navigating the complex regulatory landscape and understanding legal requirements can pose significant challenges for novice entrepreneurs.

Moreover, there may be a lack of experience in risk management and resilience-building, particularly in the face of economic uncertainties or disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Young entrepreneurs often require mentorship, guidance, and access to networks to develop these skills and overcome initial hurdles.

According to experts organizing the MBA at the Business School of the Chamber of Commerce of Valencia, 90% of entrepreneurs fail in their first project and the reasons are:

- The vast majority fail in basic skills for business management and administration.
- Many understand their business ideas, but often fail to grasp the market mechanisms that will determine the success or failure of their business model
- Lack of understanding of how innovation works and the unfamiliarity with real competitors (both direct and indirect)
- Insufficient funding at the right time, accurate assessment of opportunities, inflated expectations, and the inability to adapt to unforeseen changes.
- Inability to communicate effectively, not recognizing the value of feedback for an idea, poor implementation of a commercial strategy, or not understanding the dynamics of interpersonal relationships potentially harming the viability of the business.

In Spain, solopreneurs face various competence gaps and have training needs that are critical for their success in navigating the complexities of entrepreneurship. These include:

Business Management Skills: Many solopreneurs in Spain lack foundational knowledge in business management practices, such as strategic planning, financial management, and operations. Training in these areas is essential to help solopreneurs effectively manage their ventures, make informed decisions, and ensure long-term sustainability.

Marketing and Sales: Solopreneurs may struggle with identifying target markets, creating effective marketing campaigns, and converting leads into customers. Training in digital marketing, market research, branding, and sales techniques can help solopreneurs improve their marketing efforts and drive business growth. Other interesting topics emerged from case studies are: Design Thinking, Elevator Pitch and Visual Thinking, designing

a prototype of the product/service for market testing, launching the product/service by identifying the best marketing channel.

Digital Literacy and Technology Skills: In an increasingly digitalized world, solopreneurs need to be proficient in using technology tools and platforms to streamline operations, reach customers online, and stay competitive. Training in areas such as website development, social media marketing, e-commerce, and data analytics is essential to enhance digital readiness among solopreneurs.

Networking and Relationship Building: Solopreneurs often operate in isolation, lacking the networks and relationships needed to support their businesses. Competence gaps may exist in networking, relationship building, and collaboration with other entrepreneurs, potential clients, and industry professionals. Effective communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, and leadership are priority areas for development.

Time Management and Productivity: Managing time effectively and maintaining productivity are common challenges for solopreneurs who juggle multiple tasks and responsibilities. Training in time management techniques, goal setting, and productivity tools can help solopreneurs optimize their workflow and achieve their business objectives more efficiently.

Resilience and Stress Management: Entrepreneurship can be inherently stressful, and solopreneurs may struggle with managing stress, overcoming setbacks, and maintaining motivation during challenging times. Competence gaps may exist in resilience-building strategies, stress management techniques, and maintaining mental well-being. The ability to adapt to change, collaboration, and the ability to lead with empathy are crucial qualities for any entrepreneur or self-employed person, regardless of the sector in which they operate.

As a consequence, training areas of interest include:

Entrepreneurship Education: Integration of entrepreneurship education into school curricula at all levels to instil an entrepreneurial mindset from an early age. This includes practical training in idea generation, business planning, project management, business project acceleration, sustainable innovation, sales lead generation for start-ups, entrepreneurship research to establish strategic alliances, validate a business idea and understand its potential and weaknesses, idea generation and development, SWOT and market analysis, marketing plan, business strategies, work organisation, materials needed to start the business activity, legal aspects and detailed economic plan including investments, expenses and income, soft skills, business design, digital transformation, green and social business, Knowledge Triangle Integration method.

Digital Skills Training: Emphasis on digital literacy and proficiency in using digital tools and platforms for business development, marketing, and operations. As mentioned, training programs may cover topics such as website development, social media marketing, e-commerce, and data analytics.

Financial Literacy: Education on financial management, budgeting, accounting principles, access to funding options, crowdfunding and advice for crowdfunding fundraising campaigns. This equips aspiring solo-entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills needed to manage finances effectively and make informed decisions about investment and growth.

Networking and Collaboration: Facilitation of networking opportunities, mentorship programs, and peer-to-peer learning platforms to foster collaboration, knowledge sharing, and mutual support among entrepreneurs. Building strong professional networks can provide valuable insights, resources, and potential partnerships for solo entrepreneurs.

Resilience Building: Training programs focused on resilience-building strategies, risk management, and adaptability to navigate challenges and setbacks encountered during the entrepreneurial journey. This includes mental health support, stress management techniques, and strategies for maintaining work-life balance.

Opportunities: training available and operational tools

Based on findings, please provide for any input/information/data on the following:

- *Is solo entrepreneurship and self-employed addressed at country level from an education and training perspective?*
- *Are there structured and established training programmes at HE level tailored on solo-entrepreneurship?*
- *Are there evidences supporting solo entrepreneurship and self-employment as a priority/area of interest in your national HE ecosystem?*

Please also provide to insert here at least 3 case studies/best practices or example, policies or initiatives in support.

Please always quote the source and list the source in the references (see also the bibliography file in Excel)

Spain recognizes the importance of entrepreneurship education and has integrated related subjects into its educational system, particularly at the university level. However, the emphasis on solo entrepreneurship may vary across different educational institutions.

While there are entrepreneurship training programs available, they may not always be specifically tailored to solo entrepreneurship. Many of these programs focus on general entrepreneurial skills and may not address the unique challenges faced by solo entrepreneurs.

Some universities in Spain offer courses and programs in entrepreneurship, including at the graduate level. However, the extent to which these programs specifically cater to solo entrepreneurship varies. Programs may cover topics such as business planning, marketing, and finance, but may not always focus specifically on solo ventures.

Certain universities or business schools offer specialized courses or workshops targeting solo entrepreneurship. These courses provide insights into managing a business as a sole proprietor and navigating the challenges unique to solo ventures.

The Spanish government has shown support for entrepreneurship through initiatives like the National Entrepreneurship Strategy. However, it does not always specifically prioritize solo entrepreneurship over other forms of entrepreneurship.

Challenges

Based on findings, please provide for challenges, barriers, inhibitors, etc., which have a negative impact for the for the professional development of young aspiring solo-entrepreneurs.

These challenges can refer to both endogenous factors (i.e., low levels of digital business skills, sense of initiative, financial illiteracy, etc. among target groups) as well as structural (i.e., lack of support policies, economic instability, etc.).

Please always quote the source and list the source in the references (see also the bibliography file in Excel).

The professional development of young aspiring solo-entrepreneurs in Spain faces various challenges, stemming from both endogenous factors related to individual capabilities and structural issues within the business environment.

In his book "*El libro negro del emprendedor*", Fernando Trías de Bes focuses on identifying potential causes of failure in entrepreneurship. Trías de Bes emphasizes that businesses often fail due to mundane reasons such as personal problems, disagreements with partners, lack of common sense, excessive expectations, fears, or minor errors that can escalate over time.

In particular, the following endogenous factors and structural challenges are reported:

Low Levels of Digital Business Skills: Many young aspiring solo-entrepreneurs lack adequate digital business skills, hindering their ability to navigate online markets and leverage digital tools effectively.

Sense of Initiative: Some individuals within this demographic may struggle with a lack of initiative, preventing them from proactively identifying and pursuing entrepreneurial opportunities.

Financial Illiteracy: A limited understanding of financial concepts such as budgeting, cash flow management, and investment can pose significant barriers to the financial sustainability of solo entrepreneurial ventures.

Lack of Support Policies: The absence of targeted support policies and initiatives specifically tailored to young solo-entrepreneurs may limit their access to resources and guidance necessary for business development.

Economic Instability: Economic instability, exacerbated by factors such as fluctuations in the market and regulatory uncertainties, can create a challenging environment for aspiring solo-entrepreneurs to establish and grow their businesses.

The professional development of young aspiring solo-entrepreneurs in Spain is impeded by this combination of endogenous factors related to individual capabilities and structural challenges within the business landscape. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach involving targeted education and training programs, supportive policies, and efforts to foster economic stability.

Furthermore, the book categorizes 14 key factors of business failure into five areas (the nature of the entrepreneur, partners, the business idea, the entrepreneur's family situation, and growth management), namely:

1. Starting a business with a motive but without motivation.
2. Not having an entrepreneurial character.
3. Not being a fighter.
4. Having partners when they could be avoided.
5. Choosing partners without defining relevant selection criteria.
6. Splitting equity equally when not everyone contributes equally.
7. Lack of trust and communication with partners.
8. Thinking that success depends solely on the idea.
9. Venturing into sectors that are disliked or unknown.
10. Choosing unattractive sectors of activity.
11. Making the business dependent on family needs.
12. Starting a business without considering its impact on personal balance.
13. Creating business models that do not generate profits quickly.
14. Being an entrepreneur but not a businessman and not retiring in time.

Conclusions

Based on findings, please provide for a list of lessons learned and recommendations that are of relevance both for readers and SELF future implementation.

Through research and observation, several important lessons have emerged about the needs and challenges faced by young solo entrepreneurs. It has become clear that enhancing digital literacy is crucial, as many young entrepreneurs struggle with the digital skills essential for modern business operations. The role of education is also paramount; financial literacy and business skills are vital for entrepreneurial success but are often underrepresented in formal education systems. The success rates of solo entrepreneurs are significantly influenced by robust support systems, including mentorship programs and networking opportunities. Additionally, the broader economic context can either facilitate or hinder entrepreneurial activity, with economic instability and a lack of specific policies for solo entrepreneurs creating significant barriers. Lastly, a proactive approach and personal initiative are critical traits that should be fostered from a young age.

Based on these insights, several recommendations can be proposed. Educational institutions should offer courses focused specifically on the skills needed by solo entrepreneurs, such as digital marketing, financial management, and strategic planning. Governments should implement supportive policies, including tax benefits, startup grants, and simplified business registration processes. Enhancing access to digital tools and resources can help bridge the gap for those lacking digital skills, possibly through partnerships between educational institutions and technology providers, as it happens in SELF project. Moreover, fostering a culture of entrepreneurship in schools, HEIs and communities from an early age can nurture a sense of initiative and resilience. Creating networking opportunities by facilitating connections with business mentors, experienced entrepreneurs, and peers can provide invaluable guidance and open up new opportunities.

For our project SELF that focus on supporting young solo entrepreneurs, these insights are particularly valuable as they suggest tailoring training programs to the specific needs and challenges of the solo-entrepreneurial ecosystem and work closely with universities to integrate solo-entrepreneurship into their curricula. Staying informed about economic trends can help prepare solo-entrepreneurs for potential challenges, and encouraging a culture of continuous learning and adaptation among young entrepreneurs can help them remain resilient and responsive in a dynamic market. By integrating these lessons and recommendations, SELF can enhance its impact and better support the professional development of young aspiring solo entrepreneurs.

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Insert here all your references and the sources you used to compile the Country Snapshot.

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