

**National College of Ireland**  
**CA Submission Sheet – 2023/2024**

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**Programme:** ...MSc in Entrepreneurship..... **Year:** ..... 2024.....

**Module:** ...DISSERTATION FINAL SUBMISSION .....

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**Submission Due Date:** ...02 August 2024.....

**CA Title:** ... The professional immigrants' potential and their connection with the dynamics of entrepreneurship in Ireland: From policy to practice, case study in Dublin .....

**Word Count:** ...19.258.....

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23110961 – William Andres Quintero Bautista	MSc in Entrepreneurship	02 August 2024

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# The professional immigrants' potential and their connection with the dynamics of entrepreneurship in Ireland: From policy to practice, case study in Dublin

William Andres Quintero Bautista

Master of Science in Entrepreneurship  
National College of Ireland

Dissertation Submission  
August 2024

The professional immigrants' potential and their  
connection with the dynamics of  
entrepreneurship in Ireland: From policy to  
practice, case study in Dublin

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Dissertation submitted as part of the Master's Degree in  
Entrepreneurship in National College of Ireland

Submitted to National College of Ireland, August 2024

## Abstract

Nowadays, migration is part of the daily processes that a society undergoes and represents one of the many ways in which it is transformed. For some countries, the phenomenon of immigration can be a problem that generates social rejection or discrimination, but for other nations, it can be an opportunity to be used in favour of the development of a people. The Republic of Ireland is one such case, where immigration is part of its domestic policy, which adapts to global economic, social, political and environmental dynamics.

This research aims to determine the relationship and influence between the phenomenon of immigration in Ireland and the existing opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship, as well as the challenges faced by professional immigrants in successfully accessing these opportunities. To this end, the mixed research method was used, both qualitative and quantitative, with a greater predominance of the former, to collect and analyse the information from the different perspectives of the actors who were the object of the research.

In order to resolve the research questions, it was decided to work with the semi-structured interview model, with the aim of analysing, from the narrative of the people's own experiences, the whole process of immigration, access to opportunities and the connection of skills with the requirements of the market. Additionally, it was established to complement the study with the survey tool, in order to statistically support (from descriptive statistics and some correlational studies) the qualitative analyses, identifying patterns and trends. The target audience have been defined to professional migrants between 20 and 35 years old, living in Dublin, either as students or graduates.

This research found a strong tendency for migrants to have a negative perception of the challenge of integrating professionally into Irish society, in terms of documentation, recognition of qualifications, networking and a clear route to accessing entrepreneurial opportunities. With 80% of the sample either unaware or unclear about government policy and support, this makes it even more complex. Although there is progress in terms of policies for the coming years, the feeling is that it is difficult to integrate the immigrant professional population in Ireland.

Finally, after the analysis of all the information and considering the limitations of the study, a series of recommendations are put forward for the actors involved in this issue and to promote a better articulation with the current policies, plans and strategies of the Irish Government and to establish the challenges in terms of entrepreneurship, for the professional migrant population in Ireland in the coming years.

**Keywords**

Entrepreneurship, Intrapreneurship, Ireland, Immigrants, Professional, Policy

## Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

National College of Ireland

Research Students Declaration Form

*(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)*

**Name:** William Andres Quintero Bautista

**Student Number:** X23110961

**Degree for which thesis is submitted:** Master's Degree in Entrepreneurship

**Title of Thesis:** The professional immigrants' potential and their connection with the dynamics of entrepreneurship in Ireland: From policy to practice, case study in Dublin

**Thesis supervisor:** Victor del Rosal

**Date:** 31 July 2024

### Material submitted for award

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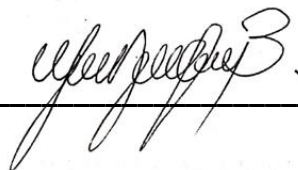
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**Date:** 31 July 2024



## Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank God for allowing me to reach this point in my professional career, in this beautiful country and in this prestigious institution such as the National College of Ireland. It has been a year of hard work, a lot of effort and many hours invested in this project to obtain the Master's Degree. Without his presence, nothing would be possible and he supports me every day in the challenge of being here in the country far from my home.

Secondly, I would like to thank the people who took part in this research, both in the surveys and in the interviews; their support was fundamental in order to obtain the necessary information and to carry out the entire methodological plan.

Thirdly, I would like to thank my supervisor Victor del Rosal, who always very kindly gave me his support, guidance and advice to develop the research project with the highest degree of professionalism possible.

Fourthly, I would like to thank my university, NCI, its staff and all the lecturers with whom I was able to study, make contact and receive all their advice, knowledge and support throughout the development of my master's degree. It has been a challenge for me to maintain high professional and academic standards, which I was able to achieve with a lot of effort and dedication.

Finally, I want to thank and dedicate all this to my family in Colombia, my mom Magdalena, my dad Luis Gonzaga, my brothers Eduard and Durlandy, my sisters-in-law Angela and Milena, my loved godchildren Isabela and Martin, to all of them who always give me the inspiration to move forward, sending me their support and prayers. Likewise, with my close friends and special people who have also been supporting me unconditionally from the distance: Andres, Diana, Andrea, my new friends in Ireland and my classmates as well.

A special thanks to my cousin and brother Ricardo Poveda, who has always been by my side since I was a child and from whom I had a very important support to be able to be part of this master's program at the National College of Ireland.



I continue to move forward in this professional life project and I will continue working to make my dreams and projects come true, with the same motivation with which I came to this country and to be able to demonstrate my abilities. This is one-step of many more to take.

*“When you’re playing a point, it is the most important thing in the world. But when it’s behind you, it’s behind you... This mindset is really crucial, because it frees you to fully commit to the next point... and the next one after that... with intensity, clarity and focus.”*

*Roger Federer (myjoyonline.com, 2024)*

Thank you all very much

God Bless

**William Q.**

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## List of Abbreviations

EU – European Union

OECD – The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

N0 – Null Hypothesis

Ha – Alternate Hypothesis

EC – European Commission

CSO - Central Statistics Office

DCEDIY - Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

DFHERIS - Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

DJ - Department of Justice

DES - Department of Education and Skills

LEO - Local Enterprise Office

CECs - Community Enterprise Centres

EI - Enterprise Ireland

SFI - Science Foundation Ireland

BICs - Business Innovation Centres

SBCI - Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland

SMEs - Small and medium-sized enterprises

STEP - Startup Entrepreneur Programme

GEC - Guinness Enterprise Centre

## Introduction

The phenomenon of immigration is a process that has been present in the world for hundreds of years and is part of the evolution of the human being, as a social actor that constantly adapts to changes in the environment (Borjas, 2014). The Republic of Ireland is a country that has historically experienced this social phenomenon from different perspectives. Some of them due to its complex historical development derived from the mixture of cultures in its territory (Fitzgerald and Lambkin, 2008) and other perspectives that have arisen in recent decades. This is due to its consolidation as a growing, dynamic, changing economy that has opened up to the world as it had never done in more than 100 years, since its constitution as an independent republic (International Organization for Migration, 2006; Bushin and White, 2010).

Following the global financial crisis of 2008 and after some difficult years, Ireland decided to take a step forward in its strategy to become a powerful economy in the European Union (Krajewska, 2014). The country decided to adopt an economic policy, which, from 2012 onwards, led to a massive influx of the world's leading companies to establish their headquarters on the island (Fitzgerald, 2014).

This phenomenon resulted in the arrival of new capital and foreign direct investment, which greatly boosted the country in terms of education, employment, economic and social development in the following years (Forde, 2022). However, it also brought with it an increase in immigration to the country, which, despite possible criticism from different quarters, is still strongly defended by Irish society and the government, as it has had a positive effect on the economic consolidation of the country (European Commission, 2023).

Nowadays, however, the rate of immigration to the country continues to increase; in the last year, more than 141,000 people entered the country, of which 81,000 are from nationalities other than Ireland, the UK and the EU. In addition, more than 60% are between the ages of 24 and 35 (Central Statistics Office, 2023).

This represents a challenge, but also a great opportunity for the country to consolidate an immigration policy that is inclusive and provides opportunities for all actors in society (Andreosso-O'Callaghan, 2020). This is where entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship appear as real alternatives to articulate the migrant with Irish society.



The purpose of this research is to determine the degree of influence that socio-economic factors and skills of professional immigrants have on employment, entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship opportunities in the country, as well as to identify the degree of articulation with government policies and challenges in the whole integration process.

This research will be based on the articulation of qualitative and quantitative methods, called mixed methods (Saunders et al, 2019) with a predominance of the qualitative approach. In the first, a very important strategy will be used such as the semi-structured interview, to be carried out on a certain number of participants (ideally more than twenty people) from different sectors of Irish society (students, graduates, local communities, Government) and thus, to be able to understand from a social point of view, the existing perception of immigration and entrepreneurship. The second, which refers to quantitative methods, will aim to statistically evaluate the approach to the social phenomenon under study. To do this, the survey will be used as a tool to collect numerical information, analyse it using descriptive statistics and have better support in the interpretation of the results and analysis to be carried out, both inductively and deductively (Saunders et al, 2019). In addition, the target audience for the surveys will be professional migrants between 20 and 35 years old, living in Dublin, either as students or graduates.

It is important to consider that the Irish Government has been implementing a series of measures and policies to boost entrepreneurship and employability in the country, for the whole of society and that includes part of the immigrant communities. However, there is still room for improvement in terms of documentation, work permits and more dynamic inclusion of the professional profiles arriving in the country (Fitzsimons and O'Gorman, 2023; OECD, 2023). This research will allow evaluating this phenomenon from the point of view of the actors involved, such as international students, specialised professionals, local communities and some others.

Finally, despite the country's good performance in entrepreneurship, this area has seen a slight setback in recent years, more so due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Stephens et al, 2021; Andreosso-O'Callaghan, 2020). This has generated significant challenges in terms of critical skills required, access to funding, bureaucracy in documentation to set up businesses and legalise visas, as well as the supply of housing infrastructure (Golby, 2023). Therefore, the study will allow a better understanding of this scenario and articulate with the future measures that the Irish government is taking in the medium and long term.

## 1. Literature review

### 1.1. Entrepreneurship and characteristics of an entrepreneur

Nowadays, there is a growing need in the global market to generate new ways of obtaining economic income, either by the simple fact of diversifying sources or by the impulse, that has caused economic, social, political or environmental phenomena. This causes crises, changes in business dynamics or simply break the schemes in which the world has been performing (Lee et al, 2023).

Among these options, entrepreneurship can be found as one of the main pillars in the economic impulse of a society or community, due to the fact that it generates competitiveness (Dana and Ratten, 2019). Part of the argument in which entrepreneurship has taken a leading role in these times is the fact that it enables access to a number of areas, professions, tasks and activities that make entrepreneurship attractive for a person, in addition to what innovation can also represent in the future (Baron, 2021).

Entrepreneurship can revitalise the economy of both urban and rural areas and basically, anyone can be an entrepreneur, regardless of demographic, cultural, political or social conditions (Kuratko, 2024). Although in many countries, the culture of entrepreneurship is driven by openness to migrants or foreign investment (Yang and Zhang, 2023). It is increasingly evident that having an entrepreneurial ecosystem conducive to entrepreneurship is critical to ensure the sustainability and growth of the firms that are created (Mason and Brown, 2014).

However, although anyone can be an entrepreneur, not everyone does, and this is because there are a series of characteristics, both intrinsic and extrinsic, that an entrepreneur possesses and that allow them to carry out their projects (Andriany et al, 2023). In terms of external factors, these can be social, such as networking and mentoring; cultural, which are given by history and traditions; and material, such as government policies, infrastructure, market opportunities, universities, etc. (Spigel, 2017).

Kuratko (2024) further defines four profiles of entrepreneurs:

- **Nascent entrepreneurs:** is someone who is thinking of starting a business

- **Artisan entrepreneurs:** refers to the entrepreneur who is more concerned with local, value creation and independence than with macro, profit and conglomerates.
- **Home-based entrepreneurs:** locate their enterprises in their places of origin and residence.
- **Niche entrepreneurs:** who have family businesses and are appointed to manage them.

In conclusion, part of the defining characteristics of an entrepreneur are his/her ability to learn from mistakes, to calculate risks in decision making, to build teams that are much more talented than he/she is, to be open to continuous improvement and to take fear as a driving force (Kuratko, 2024). In addition, it is very important for an entrepreneur to have good networking, in order to be able to get the resources he/she needs such as capital, information or assets, which will facilitate the launch of the respective projects (Westlund, H and Adams, F., 2010; Evans, D and Jovanovic, B., 1989).

## 1.2. Entrepreneurship and Intrapreneurship in Ireland

In the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic in Ireland, many entrepreneurs had to adapt quickly to existing conditions, to the extent that they had to improve and redefine their businesses (Stephens *et al*, 2021). This further underpins what the European Union set out in its 2020 Economic and Social Committee as The Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan, which sets out a roadmap for implementing measures to improve the entrepreneurship ecosystem in the region, supporting new entrepreneurs at all stages and removing barriers that have existed for several years (European Commission, 2020).

In this context, policies in favour of local entrepreneurship have increased and have become a driver to boost economic growth, taking into account that there are still gaps in some regions regarding these policies (Ortega-Argilés, 2022).

In the case of Ireland, there is a great opportunity to strengthen immigrant entrepreneurship due to the growing number of foreign communities in the country, especially students and professionals in different areas, with a wealth of skills, knowledge and experience (Osaghae *et al*, 2023). However, it is clear that there are still very demanding obstacles and requirements to consolidate a good

entrepreneurship policy in the country (Lucas, 2019) and that a deeper analysis of its future implications is needed.

Fitzsimons, P. and O'Gorman, C. (2012), in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) conducted in 2011 for the Republic of Ireland; define the entrepreneurship process in different phases, depending on the degree of maturity and socio-economic factors of entrepreneurs in the country (See Figure 1).

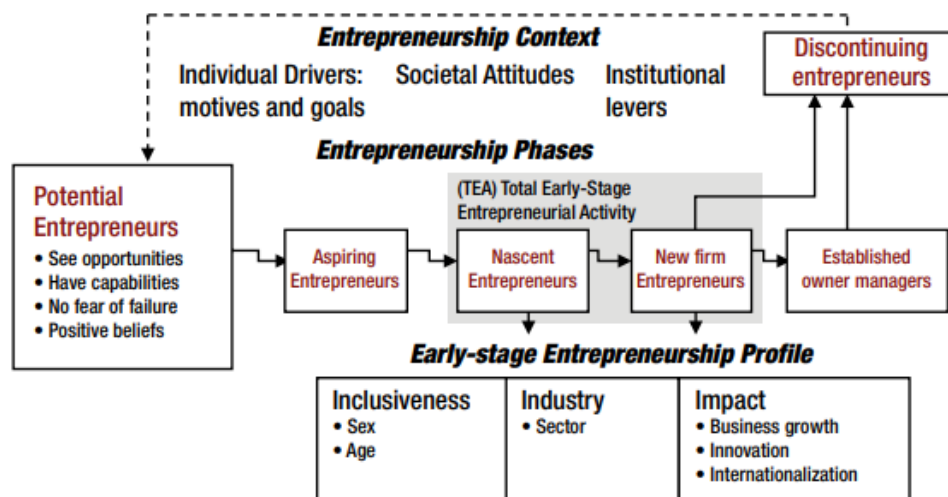


Figure 1. *The Entrepreneurship Process*. Source: Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2011 (Fitzsimons and O’Gorman, (2012), page 26)

In this study, it was determined that a large part of the population in Ireland has among its aspirations to be entrepreneurs and, even more significant, the fact that this spirit comes from different roles or profiles that seek to contribute to the country's economy (Fitzsimons and O'Gorman, 2012). This is very important because due to the boom and arrival of foreign direct investment in the country, as a result of the corporate tax policy (Barry, 2019), there were conditions that began to favour an ecosystem and a dynamic of entrepreneurship on the island, which boosted the population's motivation for entrepreneurship. This was clearly not the case in previous years, as a result of the global economic downturn.

However, 10 years later, the country has undergone an accelerated transformation, which has placed it in the top 5 in the European Union, in the countries with the best rates of entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship (Fitzsimons and O'Gorman, 2023).

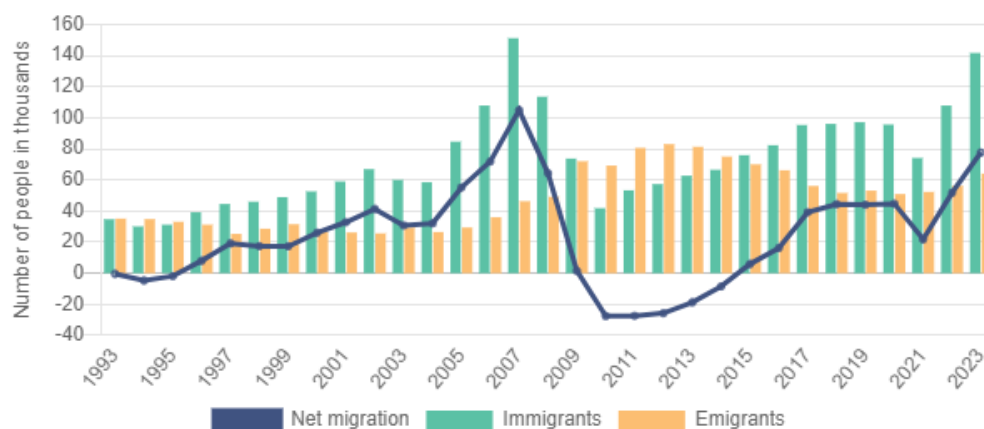
In the most recent study by Fitzsimons and O'Gorman (2023), over 60% of people in Ireland, perceive good opportunities for entrepreneurship, three out of five people

see entrepreneurship as a real life choice and over 66% of entrepreneurs consider using more digital technology to innovate their service offerings.

In conclusion, these factors are fundamental because they position Ireland as a country with a favourable ecosystem for both entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship. In addition, this culture of entrepreneurship is reinforced by academia itself and is part of the skills that need to be developed and fostered in the island's population today (O'Gorman, 2015).

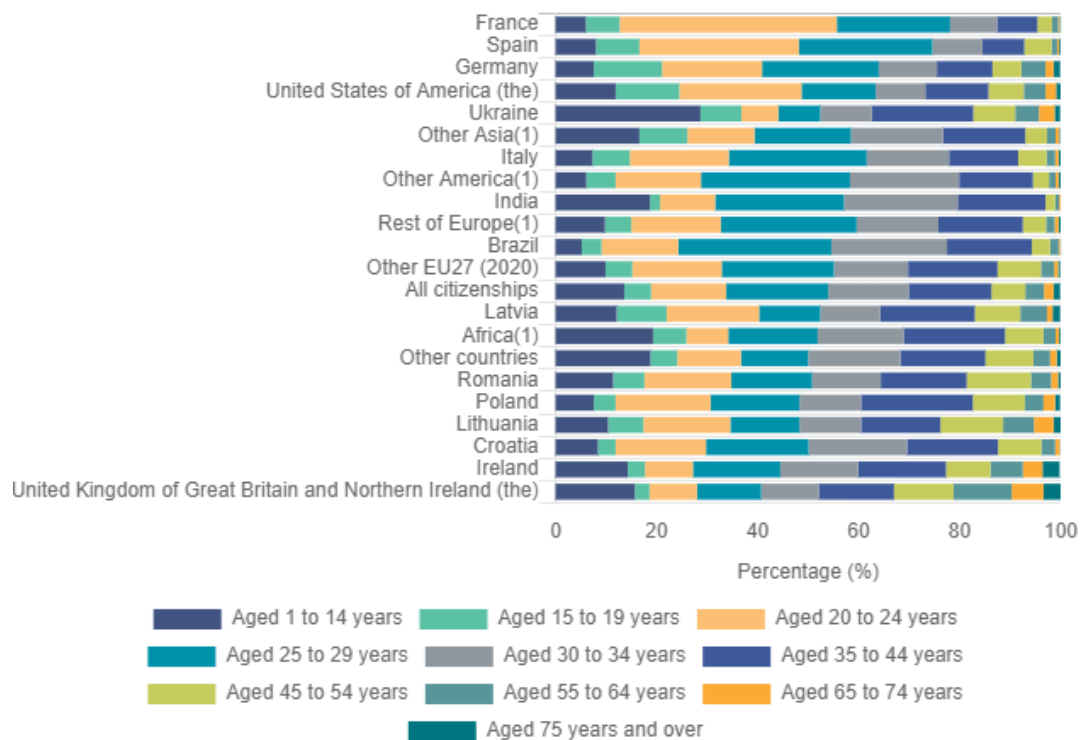
### 1.3. Immigration in Ireland

According to the Central Statistics Office (CSO) (2023), the body responsible for the administration of statistics in the Republic of Ireland, as of April 2023, over 141,000 people entered the country in the one-year period, the highest number since 2007 (see Figure 2). Of that number, around 81,000 were immigrants of other nationalities, excluding Irish, EU and UK citizens (Central Statistics Office, 2023).



*Figure 2 Immigration, Emigration and Net Migration 1993 - 2023 (Central Statistics Office in Ireland, 2023)*

This trend, which has been growing in recent years, shows that there is a certain openness in the country's immigration policy, and this is largely the result of the country's growth over the last decade and the implementation of economic policies that have provided stability, even during the crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic (OECD, 2023).



*Figure 3. Population aged one year and over usually resident and present in the State who came to live in the State in the year leading up to Census 2022 by age group and citizenship (Central Statistics Office in Ireland, (2023))*

Considering the Census conducted in 2022 in the country, it was evident that India was the main nationality in immigration rates in Ireland, followed by Brazil, Spain and other European nationalities (Central Statistics Office, 2023).

On the other hand, one of the most striking aspects of these statistics is the age of immigrants. According to Figure 3, it is evident that the majority of the population that migrated to the country is between 24 and 34 years old. This is a very important point, as it explains part of the reasons why Ireland has had an active dynamic in the rates of entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship and diversity of projects in the technology sector, artificial intelligence, service industries and fintech (Fitzsimons and O'Gorman, 2023).

### **Integration of immigrants in the Irish society**

Integration is a social phenomenon that is very important to ensure that migrants can access and achieve the same economic and social goals as a native (OECD, 2019).

It is no secret that migration is a phenomenon that has been occurring for centuries, but more than that, the point to consider is how developed policies are to integrate migrants into a society. In the study conducted by the OECD (2019), it is determined that, although conditions for integrating migrants have improved, there is still a long way to go to ensure a balance of opportunities. This stems from access to employment, qualifications, skills and access to economic opportunities (Gilmartin, 2023).

Immigration brings with it some benefits in terms of covering sectors of the economy such as infrastructure, public services, technology or the environment, as long as it is done in a responsible manner (Macdonald and Cornacchione, 2023).

In the case of Ireland, according to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2023), since 2017 the government has implemented a series of measures, policies and strategies to facilitate the integration process of migrants in the country. Part of this process was presented by restructuring government agencies for this purpose and better managing these policies (European Commission, 2023).

According to the latest "Migrant integration strategy 2017-2020" by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2020), the Irish Government focuses its policy on the following factors:

- Access to Citizenship / Long Term Residency
- Access to Public Services and Social Inclusion
- Education
- Employment and Pathways to Work
- Health
- Integration in the Community
- Political Participation
- Promoting Intercultural Awareness and Combating Racism and Xenophobia
- Volunteering
- Sport

Overall, such measures have had a positive influence in positioning Ireland as a nation that supports the rights of migrants and their access to opportunities in employment, education, health, sport and culture (Gilmartin, 2023).

#### 1.4. Legal and policy framework for work, intrapreneurship and entrepreneurship in Ireland for foreigners

Immigrant entrepreneurship is an activity established by immigrants and whose entrepreneurial performance is influenced by both the migrant population and the native-born population (Kerr and Kerr, 2016). This form of integration, as well as intrapreneurship and work in general, represents a great opportunity for the migrant population, which seeks to establish a life project in the country of residence.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought with it many negative effects at the global level. However, it is worth noting that there is another side to the coin, in which a paradigm shift in the way of doing business and entrepreneurship was generated (Harima, 2022). Hundreds of business opportunities and market demand for new products and services, once the most difficult phase of the recent pandemic has been overcome, have been generated to such an extent that they represent a great opportunity for entrepreneurship in migrant populations (Osaghae and Cooney, 2023).

Although intrapreneurship has declined in Ireland, it is still very representative with over 8.5% of the employed population and well positioned in relation to EU members (Fitzsimons and O'Gorman, 2023).

Therefore, all these ways of revitalising and stimulating the economy have, over time, been promoted and regulated by the Irish government and, moreover, because of the impact they generate in a country that has had good macroeconomic performance indicators over the last decade (European Commission, 2020).

##### **Institutions in Ireland focused on entrepreneurship and work in the country**

Whereas Ireland, despite a drop in the global ranking of business friendliness, according to the World Bank is ranked 23rd (World Bank, 2020). It is still a country that continues to work to provide the best conditions for domestic and foreign entrepreneurs to set up SMEs, start-ups, intrapreneurship and skilled trades in the country (see Table 1).

Aspect	Ranking
Starting a Business	23
Dealing with Construction Permits	36



Getting Electricity	47
Registering Property	60
Getting Credit	48
Protecting Minority Investors	13
Paying Taxes	4
Trading across Borders	52
Enforcing Contracts	91
Resolving Insolvency	19

*Table 1. Doing Business 2020 - Ireland Source: World Bank, 2020*

According to the OECD (2019), the country currently has various institutions that were created with the aim of promoting a culture of entrepreneurship and guaranteeing, from an institutional point of view, a favourable framework to meet this need. Some of them are:

- **Department of Education and Skills (DES):** dedicated to fostering entrepreneurship in educational institutions.
- **Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs):** to foster entrepreneurship in local communities across the country.
- **Community Enterprise Centres (CECs):** a national network to provide workspaces for start-ups.
- **Enterprise Ireland (EI):** which is responsible for all national policy regarding the creation of SMEs and start-ups with the potential to scale up and export.
- **Bord Bia (Irish Food Board):** responsible for the country's food product entrepreneurship accelerator programmes.
- **Science Foundation Ireland (SFI):** dedicated to the training and promotion of researchers in the country.
- **Campus-based Incubators and Business Innovation Centres (BICs):** more than 30 centres located throughout the country in universities and technology institutions to promote entrepreneurship, several of them also supported by Enterprise Ireland.

- **Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI):** established in 2014, to facilitate the financing of SMEs, with low-cost and flexible loans with different banking and financial institutions.

These institutions and some others, as a whole, have different programmes at national and international level to encourage the creation of ventures, SMEs and start-ups, regardless of the characteristics of the entrepreneurs. Many of these programmes target early-stage innovative projects that have the potential to scale and position the country in terms of development, business and innovation (OECD, 2019).

However, despite the existence of these programmes, there is still not enough legal and policy framework to support migrants. This situation is linked more to the aspect of naturalisation and immigration services than to the entrepreneurship programmes themselves (Solano et al, 2020; OECD, 2019). It is important to highlight then, that it is necessary to provide a dynamic ecosystem that favours access to entrepreneurship opportunities for all communities that make up Irish society, and that includes migrants (Murphy et al, 2020).

To sum up and according to the OECD (2023), although there are programmes that seek inclusive entrepreneurship in Ireland, many of them are presented at the local level and in short periods of time. This is generating gaps in the support given to this type of communities in the country and, in addition, there is no tailored policy for immigrant entrepreneurship, including financial aspects, access to incubators and support networks for the community (See Table 2).

		Tailored: Are public programmes tailored for the target group (i.e. dedicated)?	Consultation: Are the targeted entrepreneurs consulted during the design of programmes?	Outreach: Are appropriate outreach methods used for different target groups?	Delivery: Are specialist organisations used to deliver programmes?	Take-up: Does the support have high take-up among target group?	Scale: Is the scale of available support sufficient?	Impact: Does evaluation evidence show a positive impact?	Integrated: Is the programme delivered linked other related supports?	Follow-up: Do tailored programmes link to mainstream support programmes?
Skills	1. Entrepreneurship training	✓		✓	✓	✓				
	2. Entrepreneurship coaching and mentoring	✓				✓				
	3. Business consultancy, including incubators									
Finance	1. Grants for business creation									
	2. Loan guarantees									
	3. Microfinance and loans									
	4. Other instruments (e.g. crowdfunding, risk capital)									
Culture and networks	1. Entrepreneurship campaigns, including role models	✓			✓					
	2. Networking initiatives									
Regulatory supports	1. Support with understanding and complying with administrative procedures									
	2. Group-specific measures	✓		✓						
	Entrepreneurship visa Administrative and tax obligations can be met in several languages									

Table 2. Inclusive entrepreneurship schemes to support immigrant entrepreneurs Source: OECD, 2023

## 2. Research Questions

Taking into account the information presented above, the purpose of this research is to answer the following research questions:

### Main research question:

**How can socio-economic background, professional skills, and government support initiatives in Ireland influence the access and success of immigrant professionals in entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial endeavours, considering the challenges they face in this process?**

In addition, it is important to consider some sub-questions to better understand the context of the whole research:

- a) What are the socio-economic factors and skills that motivate or inhibit the entrepreneurship of professional immigrants in Ireland?
- b) What are the barriers or constraints faced by professional immigrants in Ireland to entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship?
- c) What kind of policies, supports and strategies has the government adopted to include immigrants in employment, entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship?
- d) What is Ireland's demand for employment, entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship to foster articulation with professional migrants?

The main focus of the research will be qualitative. However, a quantitative part with descriptive statistics will be used to answer and support some sub-questions.

These research questions are posed according to the information presented in the literature review and past researches, where it has been identified that there are gaps in the skills and aptitudes in the profiles of immigrant entrepreneurs to access opportunities in the country. It is important to mention that, although there are still improvements to be implemented and better articulated at the national level, there has been significant progress in the last decade (OECD, 2023).

### **2.1. Objectives**

In order to carry out the research, it is guided by the following objectives, which seek to provide answers to the research questions posed:

- 1.** To examine the characteristics of immigrants wishing to undertake entrepreneurship in Ireland, in terms of skills, aptitudes, experience, profile and background, in order to understand their motivations and perspectives.
- 2.** To identify the requirements of institutions in Ireland, in terms of profiles, skills and experience, in order for a person to be able to undertake and access work opportunities in the country.
- 3.** To assess the legal and strategic framework in Ireland to establish how the Government and institutions promote inclusive entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship with migrants, identifying areas for improvement in documentation, work permits, and the integration of professional profiles.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Onion model

For the development of this research, use will be made of the Research Model Onion, which was developed by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill in 2007. This model (see Figure 4) represents the different phases or stages that take place during the development of a research project (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

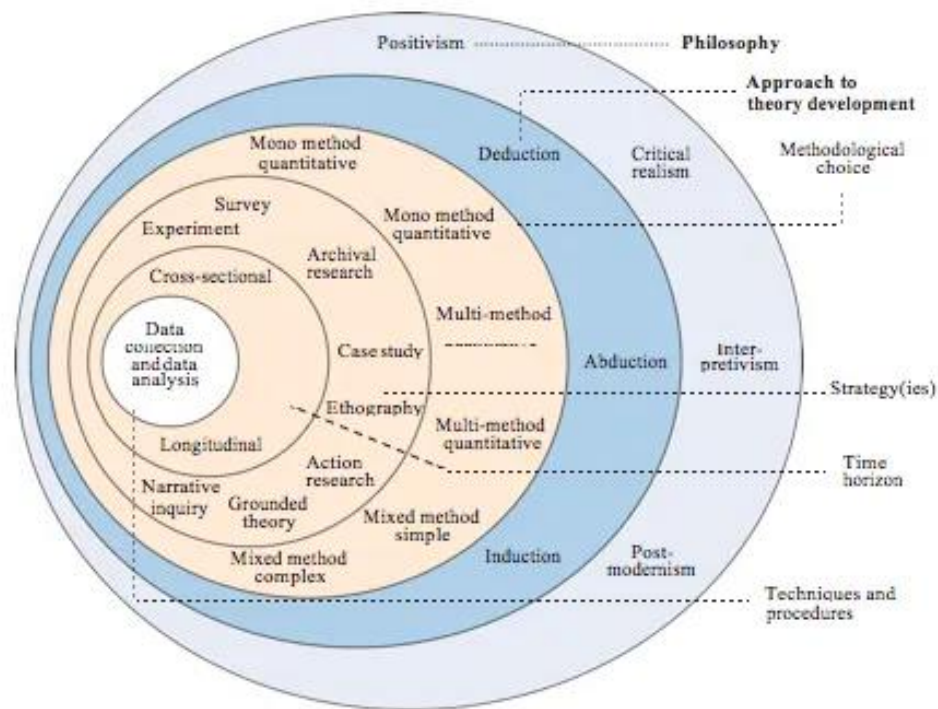


Figure 4. The Research Onion model (Saunders et al, 2019, p.174)

According to Saunders et al (2019), the first phase is focused on the perspective of philosophy, in which it has been decided to use interpretivism for the purposes of this research. Secondly, there is the methodology of reasoning and to adequately address this project; induction will be used for the qualitative aspect and deduction for the quantitative element, being, in addition, consistent with the philosophy of interpretivism.

Thirdly, the research requires a methodology for the collection of data and information, for which a simple mixed method will be used, for example, one part

qualitative and one part quantitative. In this way, it is possible to get a perspective from numbers and also a perspective from opinions and experiences.

The fourth phase is related to the strategies, which for this research project will be a case study with two techniques or tools: surveys and semi-structured one-to-one interviews. These strategies will cover the proposed research objectives and will allow for the corresponding qualitative and quantitative analysis.

The fifth phase corresponds to the time horizon, which for the purposes of this study will be cross-sectional and is perfectly adapted to the existing time limits for the development of this research.

Finally, there are the techniques and procedures previously mentioned: surveys, semi-structured one-to-one interviews, complemented with secondary information obtained from official sources and previously conducted research.

### **3.2. Research Philosophy**

Saunders et al (2019), relate research philosophy as the way in which knowledge is developed and, likewise, what its nature is like. In this way, it is possible to understand the rationale of a research, based on the researcher's assumptions and their relationship to facts and individuals.

This research will make use of Interpretivism which, according to the theoretical framework, seeks to understand the relationship between human beings from the point of view of social actors, for example, as subjects who think and act based on experiences, symbols, interactions with the environment, language, culture, etc. (Saunders et al, 2019; Packard, 2017).

#### **Research approach**

On the other hand, for this project it is required to define what kind of research approach will be used. Based on the philosophical aspect, it is very important to consider that there will be a qualitative and a quantitative aspect, so it will undoubtedly be necessary to execute the research with a combination of induction and deduction.

Both approaches are perfectly viable and, in fact, each bring benefits to meet the research objectives (Saunders et al, 2019).

The deductive approach will allow the research to be developed, starting from a series of questions and theories, which will seek to establish data-driven answers using descriptive statistics (Young et al, 2020; Saunders et al, 2019).

With the inductive approach, the information collected from the established methods and its subsequent analysis will allow the development of a theory resulting from the studied social phenomena, behaviours, opinions and feelings (Young et al, 2020; Saunders et al, 2019).

### **3.3. Research Design**

Saunders et al (2019) define research design as the overall plan for answering research questions and hypotheses.

#### **3.3.1. Methodological Choice**

The methodological choice chosen for this research is the mixed methods, which, in simple words, is the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods for the collection and analysis of the information under study (Saunders et al, 2019).

Quantitative methods focus on the numerical aspect and qualitative methods focus on the word aspect. Both methodologies are well suited to the purpose of this study, as the subject matter in general, involves the collection of numerical data to understand from a statistical perspective, certain behaviours and trends concerning migration in Ireland and their relationship to the existing conditions of innovation and entrepreneurship in the country (Schoonenboom, 2023; Saunders et al, 2019).

Additionally, the qualitative aspect (the main one in this study) allows for a complementary sociological perspective based on the feelings, experiences, emotions and opinions of the different actors involved in the research. Qualitative data collection is based on a constructivist aspect, for example, delving into experiences to develop theories and patterns in the studied phenomenon (Schoonenboom, 2023; Saunders et al, 2019; Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

#### **3.3.2. Research strategies**

The research strategies are interpreted as that plan of action and methodological connection, to collect information and subsequently analyse it, taking into account the underlying philosophical aspect (Saunders et al, 2019).



It is important to consider that all the research is directed by the research questions and the objectives set from the beginning of the research, likewise, the philosophical aspect of interpretivism, will be the way to take the information collected to an analysis that gives an answer to the questions.

Taking into account the aforementioned, the strategies will be of two types:

- **Case study with the use of semi-structured one-to-one interviews (qualitative)**

This qualitative strategy will allow for dialogue and interaction with some of the actors involved in the case study, to capture patterns of opinions, feelings and perceptions about the phenomenon studied, through the experiences that each person has had (Ibarra-Sáiz et al, 2023; Saunders et al, 2019).

Among these actors, it was decided to carry out the interviews with more than twenty professional immigrants, either students or graduates living in Dublin, mainly between 20 and 35 years of age. This age range is the age range most often present in the immigration studies carried out by the Government and reviewed previously in the literature review. In addition, where possible, other members of local communities in Ireland will be included, in order to gain further insights into the phenomenon under study.

This approach will allow to go deeper with the questionnaire used and through the inductive method, into the topics that most interest the researcher to answer the research questions, because each interview is unique and offers key information about the social phenomenon to be studied (Buys et al, 2022; Saunders et al, 2019).

- **Survey (quantitative)**

This quantitative strategy seeks to explore different aspects of an investigation, through the collection of information by means of standardised questions to a certain population size (Adams et al, 2014). It is a simple way to have a first approach to the phenomenon studied, to obtain certain numerical statistics that support the study and to suggest some answers to the relationship between the variables raised (Saunders et al, 2019).

It is important to clarify that the information collected will be used with descriptive statistics. This is in order to resolve some of the sub-questions raised and to provide additional data to support the analyses made with the interviews.

In addition, the target audience for the surveys will be professional migrants between 20 and 35 years old, living in Dublin, either as students or graduates.

### 3.3.3. Time horizon

For the purposes of this research project, a cross-sectional study will be used because, due to time constraints to conduct the entire study, it is often convenient to carry out the research using the survey technique and complement it with interviews conducted with a group of people over a certain period of time (Saunders et al, 2019).

### 3.4. Limitations

The research project has some limitations such as:

- **Timeframe:** which is quite short to carry out the whole research. In addition, the methodologies to be used, both quantitative and qualitative, will offer good sources of information, but because there is only one researcher, the development may be limited by the sample sizes, which will be possible to cover.
- **Qualitative method:** which being a part of the research based on interviews conducted one-to-one and then analysed under the philosophy of interpretivism, will undoubtedly have a subjective aspect in the analysis of the results and is a point to be taken into account in the whole development of the research.
- **Sample size:** for both qualitative and quantitative methods, the sample size of the study population will be limited by the timeframe available and the availability of resources.

### 3.5. Ethical Considerations

As part of the normal development of this research, and given that the subject of immigration is a well-known social phenomenon in the country, the following is taken into account:

- There is a very low social risk, since the participants are part of the phenomenon studied and their experiences are closely connected to the reality of the country, so that in terms of privacy, social status or reputation, there would be no major effect. On the contrary, this topic of study will allow us to delve deeper into a daily reality.

- As the research is focused on professionals, with work and academic experience behind them, the physical risk would be minimal as one-to-one interviews will be used, with full freedom for the participant to express him or herself.
- The interviews will take place in quiet spaces, which provide comfort for the participant to express themselves, so the risk of distress is low during the development of the methodology.
- If it is possible to include local Irish people or even a member of staff working in a government organisation, there may be a risk of discomfort in terms of questions or opinions about something specific to the immigration issue. To this end, consent forms will include the possibility of not being included in the research or omitting a question as part of the control over the information obtained.

## 4. Findings and Analysis

### 4.1. Data Presentation for the quantitative method

Firstly, it is necessary to consider the demographic data of the sample used to carry out the survey. This is because it is important to have a certain diversity of roles, profiles, experiences and opinions that will enrich the analysis of this issue.

A total of 82 people participated in the survey, coming from 27 different nationalities from regions such as Latin America, Africa, Europe and Asia, which can be seen in greater detail in Figure 5, where the greatest participation was from countries such as Brazil, India, Mexico, Spain and Turkey, which are part of the populations with the greatest presence of immigrants in Ireland.

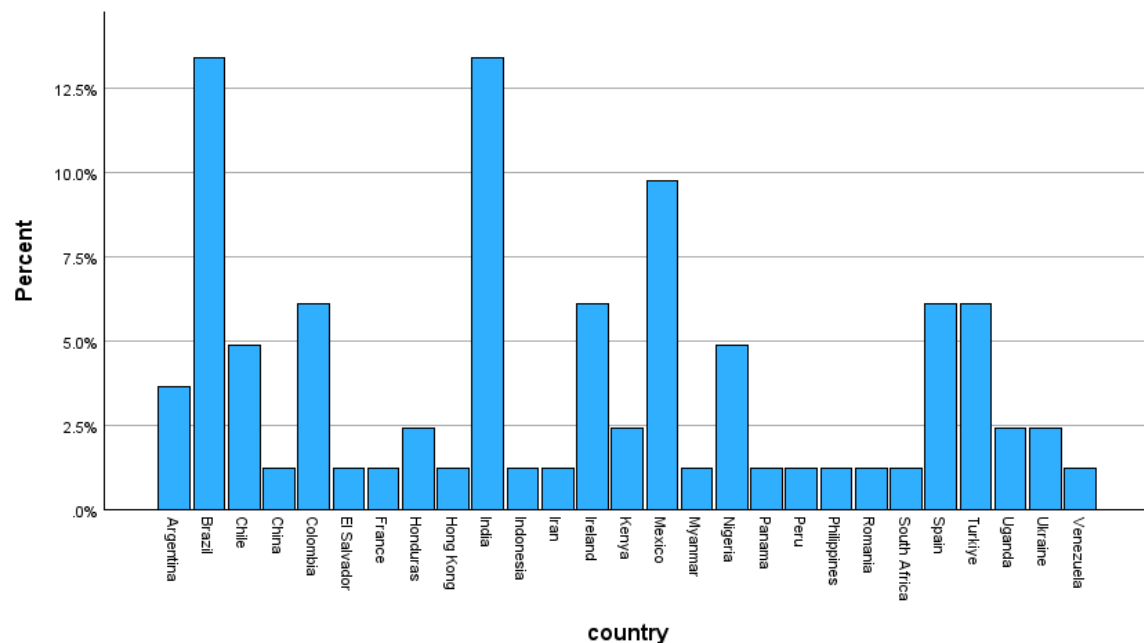


Figure 5. Nationalities of participants (Source: researcher)

In addition, profiles that are currently living in the country were considered, because it is important that they already have some experience in the territory, in order to be able to express a more informed opinion on the subject of this research. According to Figure 6, more than 60% of the people surveyed have lived in the country between 1 and 3 years, and more than 15% between 4 and 10 years. This provides us with a good data base for the analysis of the results.



*Figure 6. Years living in Ireland (Source: researcher)*

On the other hand, the importance of the profiles of the respondents has been mentioned and for this, according to figure 7, there is a diversity of roles and professional profiles that allow the research to be enriched. Profiles ranging from business/management with 43%, engineering/technology with 20% and some others in the health sector, finance, arts, marketing, among others, can be found.

It is also important to consider the employment situation of the respondents in the country, and for this reason this item was asked about, as this experience will influence each person's perception of the phenomenon of immigration in Ireland. Figure 8 shows that more than 85% of people are working, either on part-time or full-time contracts, as students to supplement their working day or as professionals who are 100% dedicated to their work.

With this general data, it is possible to establish that we have a diverse population sample, with different roles, origins and backgrounds that allows the research to have a better foundation in the process of analysing the information gathered through this methodology.

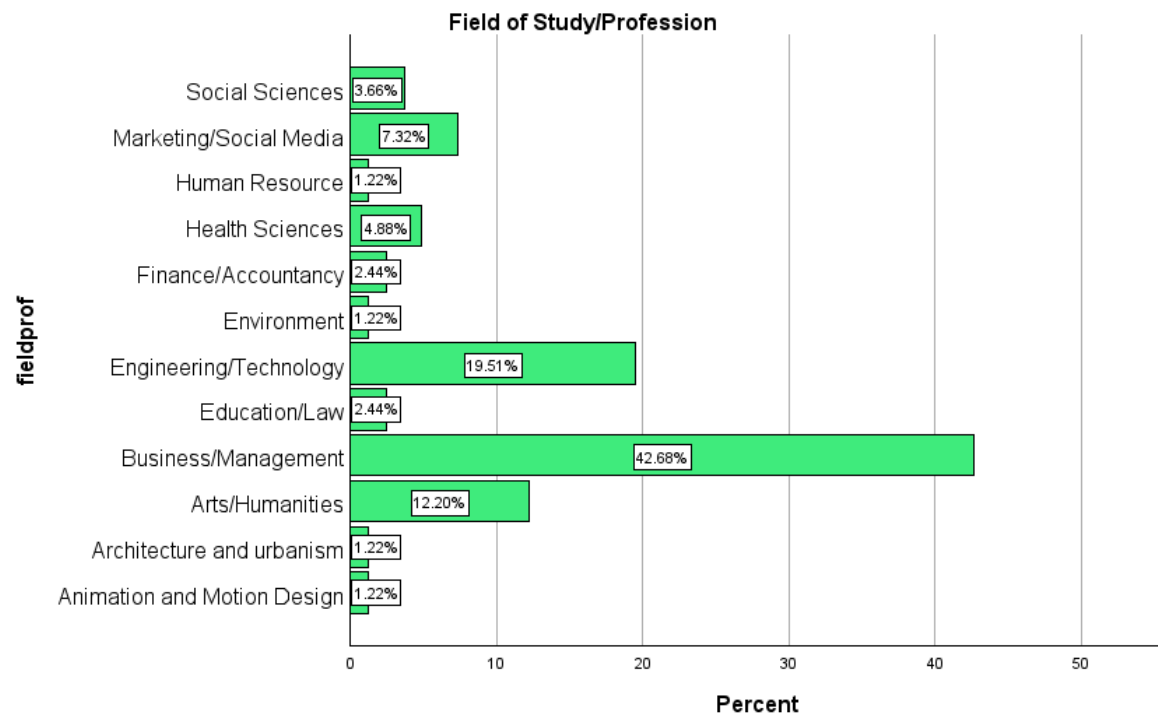


Figure 7. Field of Study/Profession (Source: researcher)

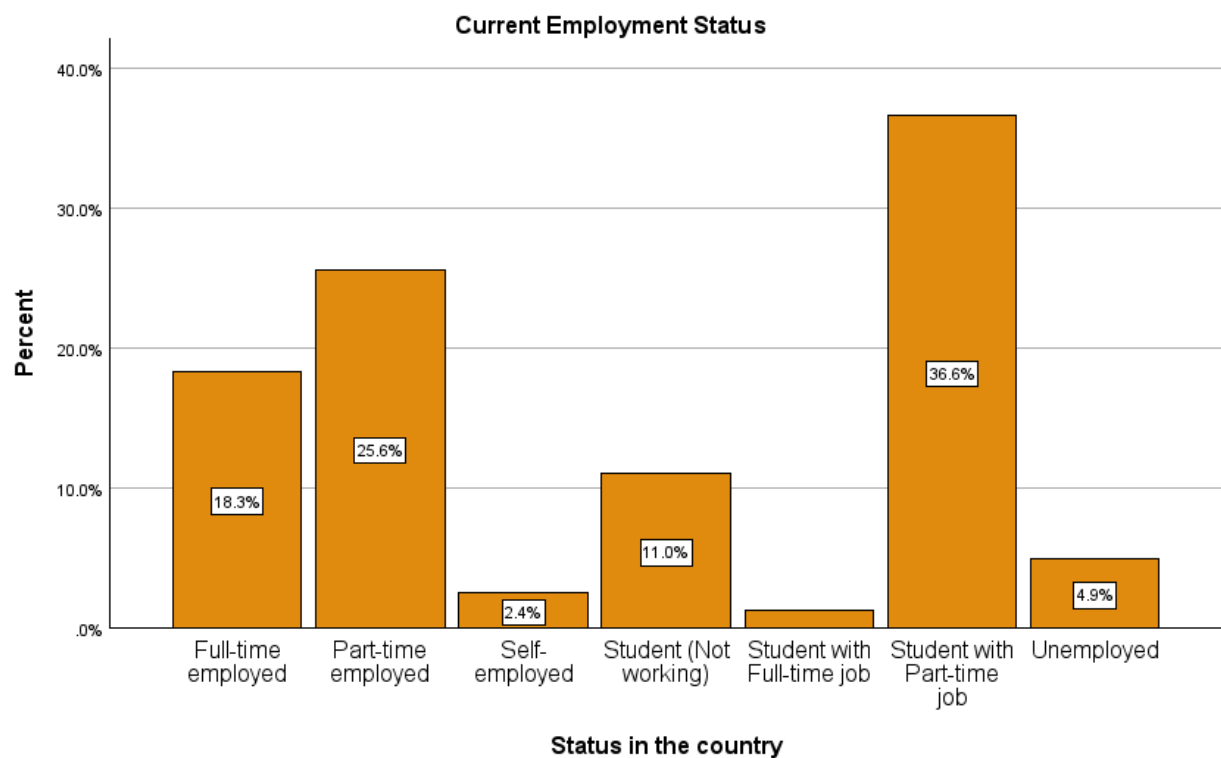


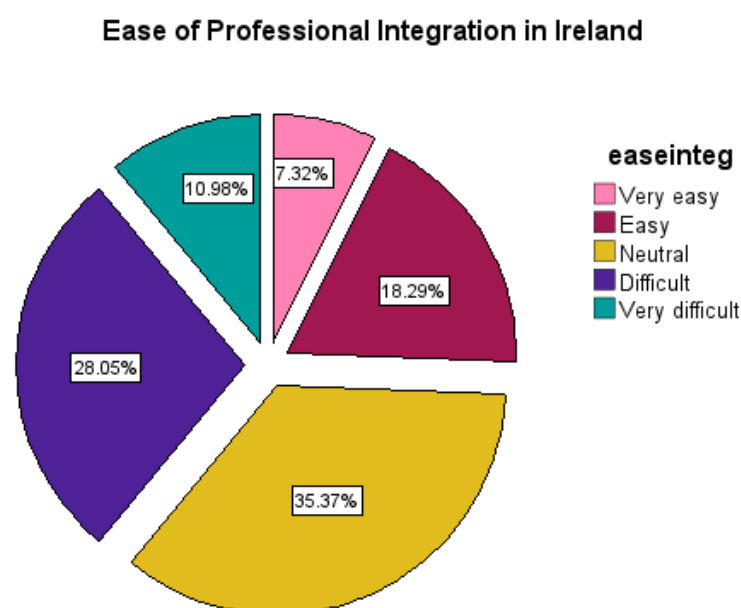
Figure 8. Current Employment Status (Source: researcher)

## 4.2. Quantitative findings

The first part of the results of this research has to do with the quantitative aspect, where the methodology of a survey was carried out, with the participation of 82 people. The purpose of this survey was to evaluate the opinion and perception of the respondents on the immigration situation of professionals in Ireland, based on different aspects that will be detailed in greater detail in the following sections.

### 4.2.1. Integration and Opportunities

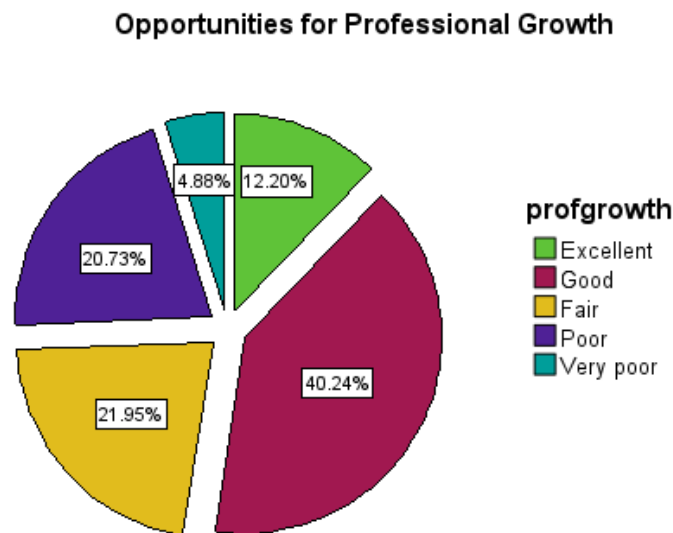
One of the first items to be assessed in the survey is related to integration and the degree of opportunities immigrants have when they arrive and live in Ireland. Respondents were asked about the ease of professional integration with the country and the results showed divided opinions among the sample population, as can be seen in Figure 9, which shows that around 40% of respondents find professional integration with the country difficult. If we take into account that 35.37% are in a neutral position, that is, in an intermediate point where the experience can be negative or positive, there is a clear scenario of difficulty for immigrants arriving in the country in search of professional integration.



*Figure 9. Ease of professional integration in Ireland (Source: researcher)*

However, if we take into account the existing perception regarding professional growth opportunities, the scenario is quite favourable despite the difficulties of integrating into the country. Looking at figure 10, where this point was evaluated with the respondents, more than 52% of people consider that there are good opportunities for professional growth and

this is not surprising, since Ireland has very favourable variables for professionals who come to the country to offer their services, regardless of whether they are local or foreign. The country's economic conditions, the presence of large multinationals that have their European headquarters located in Ireland, the high salaries and a varied and high quality educational offer, allow professionals who manage to settle in the country to have high growth opportunities within the Irish and European markets.



*Figure 10. Opportunities for professional growth (Source: researcher)*

Based on these findings, it is very interesting to know the root of this dilemma between the difficulty of integrating into the country and the high opportunities for professional growth. In Table 3, it is possible to obtain indications that justify this perception, since it is possible to observe the main challenges that an immigrant must face when arriving in the country. It is striking that points such as language or culture are not at the top of the list, due to the diversity or multiculturalism that exists in the country due to the presence of migrants from dozens of countries around the world, where adapting to the Irish culture is a challenge in itself, and now to do so in coexistence with several others. However, the main challenges are related to visas (69.5%), recognition of qualifications (40.2%) and difficulty in networking (42.7%). The first is very evident, considering that there are very marked differences in terms of documentation between a person from the European Union and a citizen belonging to other different nationalities. In addition, the highly competitive nature of getting a professional job with the aim of obtaining a work permit makes the situation even more challenging for an immigrant in Ireland.



The qualifications aspect is based on the type of professional careers that immigrants have. Ireland has a list of Critical Skills which details the most in-demand professions in the market and through them, there are greater opportunities for migrants. However, with the high level of competition in the country, it is very important to have professional qualifications from recognised educational institutions, a good command of the English language, additional courses that reinforce the skills or competences most in demand in the market, among others. For this reason, the process of recognition of qualifications is not so easy if you do not have a good academic preparation and very good work experience.

Finally, networking is perhaps one of the most important aspects to be able to adapt quickly to the Irish way of life. It is no secret that networking is not an easy task starting from scratch, in the case of many migrants, and it is also a social skill in which it is essential to have good communication skills, confidence, persuasiveness and obviously English language skills. This is even more necessary, considering that, in Irish culture, building social circles is essential to forge affective and professional ties, which help to integrate more easily into the country, to access job opportunities, business, support or even contacts to facilitate entrepreneurship or intrapreneurship processes.

**Main Challenges Faced by Immigrants**

	Respos... N	Percent of Cases
Legal/visa issues	57	69.5%
Recognition of qualifications	33	40.2%
Networking difficulties	35	42.7%
Cultural differences	20	24.4%
Language barriers	21	25.6%
Inclusiveness for people with disabilities	1	1.2%
None	1	1.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>204.9%</b>

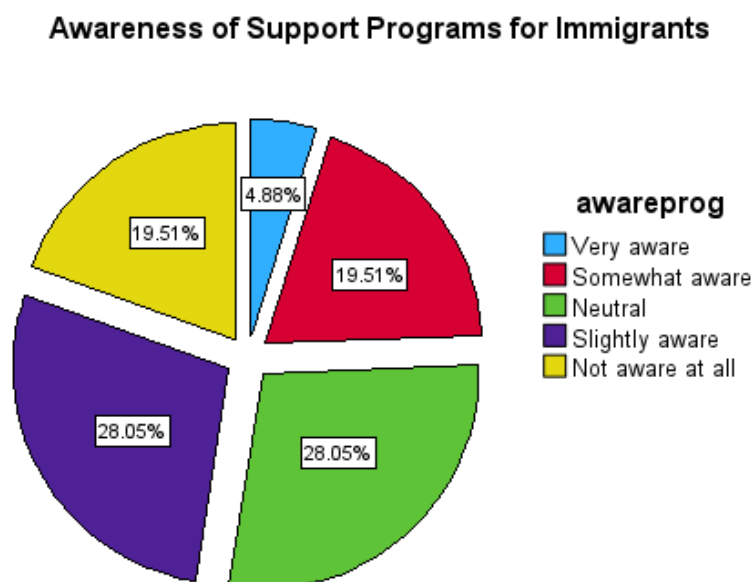
*Table 3. Main Challenges faced by immigrants (Source: researcher)*

#### **4.2.2. Support, policies and resources**

The next aspect that we sought to evaluate in the development of the survey concerned the policies, resources and support available to professional immigrants. This point is fundamental because when a person arrives in a new country, without knowledge of its culture, its processes, its procedures, its labour market, etc., one of the first actions that is

instinctively generated in the immigrant is to seek support in the local communities. This is because the experience of people who have been living in the country for a considerable time can be of great help to someone who is new to the country. Similarly, the Government has offices for migrants and in its various departments; there are programmes that seek to facilitate the process of integration into Irish society.

However, Figure 11 shows that there is a very high percentage of people who are unaware of these programmes, policies, support and information. Excluding those who are informed, around 80% of respondents have no idea or very basic information. This phenomenon is very striking and may be one of the reasons why the process of professional integration takes much longer than usual or even why opportunities in entrepreneurship, for example, or chances to improve skills, network or access valuable information for the life project in the country, are lost.



*Figure 11. Awareness of support programs for immigrants (Source: researcher)*

On the other hand, it is important to highlight that, among the types of support most used by immigrants according to the survey, are those related to networking events (42.7%) and training/workshops (45.1%). This is very important because it means that there is an awareness among immigrants to look for ways to train, to learn and to generate high-value connections within the professional areas in which they are involved. This is not only for job search purposes, but also for the ecosystem surrounding entrepreneurship activities. In Dublin, for example, there are different government programmes, institutions associated

with universities, business incubators and the offer of a large number of events throughout the year, which allow not only local citizens but also immigrants to learn about the latest market trends, new technologies, the latest developments in business and, of course, the opportunity to create connections to support new micro-enterprises. In the latter, the promotion of the creation of start-ups, which respond to the demands of the Irish market and which have a high potential for growth in the short and medium term, as well as sustainability over time, stands out. For this purpose, workshops, networking events, workshops for the creation of business plans, etc. are constantly offered, which can be of great help to the migrant, even for his or her own life project. The essential point here is the need to increase the degree of knowledge of all these resources and to make them an opportunity for the immigrant to integrate professionally.

**Types of Support Utilised by professional immigrants**

	Respos... N	Percent of Cases
Networking events	35	42.7%
Financial support/grants	16	19.5%
Training/workshops	37	45.1%
None	13	15.9%
Mentorship programs	18	22.0%
Legal assistance	9	11.0%
Total	128	156.1%

*Table 4. Types of support utilised by professional immigrants (Source: researcher)*

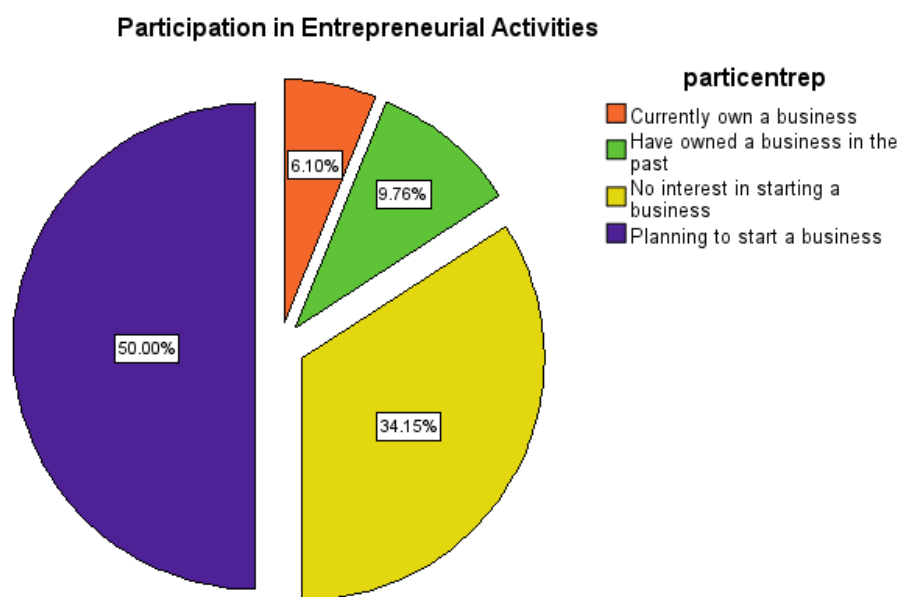
#### **4.2.3. Entrepreneurship and Intrapreneurship**

In the development of the survey, the degree of affinity of the respondents with entrepreneurial activities was assessed, because one of the items of study in this research is how an immigrant can have professional opportunities in Ireland, either through entrepreneurship (starting a new business) or intrapreneurship (innovation within an existing company). For this reason, considering both perspectives and how immigrants can engage with them is fundamental to finding valuable insights in this research.

In the first instance, as can be seen in Figure 12, respondents were asked about the degree of participation in entrepreneurship activities and a very interesting finding is that 50% of the sample has within their life project the possibility of starting a business or entrepreneurship.

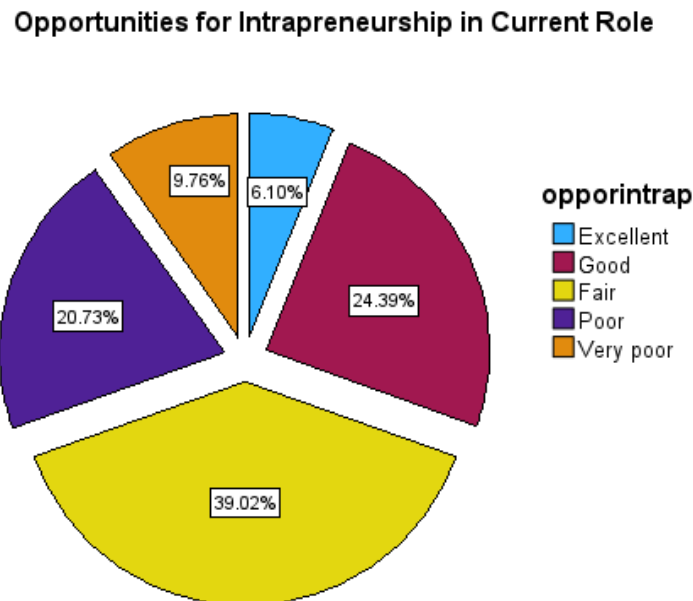
In the latter, there are about 16% who have already had a business in the past or currently have a business.

This is a very important point in the research, because, taking into account the diversity of nationalities, experiences, profiles, ages and opinions of the participants, there is a high affinity with entrepreneurial activities. This indicates, in a way, that a human resource with skills, ideas and experiences that can contribute to the country's economic development is arriving in the country.



*Figure 12. Participation in entrepreneurial activities (Source: researcher)*

One of the variables that have helped Ireland to become a nation with outstanding economic and development indicators for more than 10 years has to do with the opening of its market to the entry of foreign capital and this includes the arrival of professional immigrants with high competencies, skills and expertise in the execution of new business projects in different sectors of the economy. For this reason, the fact that we continue to find this trend in recent generations suggests that the country still has this attraction and, additionally, that there is a diversity of professional profiles arriving with ideas. The main point to consider, as mentioned above, has to do explicitly with the way in which the country and the Irish government can articulate its migration policy with the life projects of the immigrants who come to the country. This is perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing this population and one for which there is still a long way to go in terms of the regulatory framework in the country.



*Figure 13. Opportunities for intrapreneurship in current role (Source: researcher)*

However, from the intrapreneurship point of view, there is also an interesting phenomenon in the survey. As can be seen in figure 13, people were consulted about the opportunities in this branch in the country and only 30% of the respondents considered that the opportunities for intrapreneurship in the current roles are poor or low. Considering that there is a diversity of roles and occupations in the sample, people who study and work, students, full-time professionals, etc., this perception is striking, with around 40% thinking that they are fair and 30% that they are very good. This allows us to infer that there is an ecosystem within companies that enables workers to improve their position, innovate, propose new projects or implement new proposals. The fact that this perception is also held by professional immigrants makes both approaches, together with entrepreneurship, a real possibility to integrate into the country. It is clear that the aforementioned challenges are still present, but it is striking that, despite this, there is still a favourable scenario for immigrants to undertake and innovate within organisations.

In addition to the above, Table 5 shows the aspects that need to be improved in terms of policies in Ireland for a favourable integration of professional immigrants.

**Areas for Policy Improvement in Ireland regarding professional immigration**

	Respons... N	Percent of Cases
Networking opportunities	40	48.8%
Legal/visa support	59	72.0%
Access to funding	35	42.7%
Recognition of foreign qualifications	45	54.9%
None	2	2.4%
Cultural integration programs	29	35.4%
Supports for people with disabilities	1	1.2%
Bureaucracy	1	1.2%
Total	212	258.5%

*Table 5. Areas for policy improvement in Ireland regarding professional immigration (Source: researcher)*

Not surprisingly, respondents consider that in first place is the legal barrier regarding visas and work permits with 72%. Secondly, the recognition of qualifications with 54.9%, which is a very important aspect that the Irish government must continue to work on, hand in hand with the private sector. This is due to the fact that many of the professional immigrants arriving in the country have a university education and many of the processes of recognition of professional qualifications can be affected by the lack of alignment of education policies. It is for this reason that many companies do not decide to hire or move forward with foreign profiles, due to the lack of articulation in the recognition of qualifications. The government has been working with the universities to facilitate the recognition process through complementary studies, academic semesters and additional courses that allow immigrants to align their training with the Irish academic framework.

Other areas for improvement mentioned in Table 5 are networking opportunities (48.8%) and access to funding (42.7%). The latter is perhaps one of the most complex aspects for immigrants wishing to start entrepreneurship activities in Ireland. This is because there is a connection with the issue of visas and work permits, which makes it very difficult to access capital or sources of funding to start a business in the country. In this matter, the government could consider the possibility of making it more flexible or allowing better coordination with the entrepreneurial ecosystem for immigrants, for example, making it easier for immigrants

with high-potential projects or business ideas to access financing from the government or banks.

#### 4.2.4. Correlational Analysis

Complementing the descriptive analysis carried out previously, an extra correlational analysis was carried out between the different variables evaluated with the survey carried out and in this way, to be able to identify some behaviours or findings that are useful for the research. In total, more than 15 variables were evaluated among themselves and some of them used for this analysis are:

Description	Code
Ease of Professional Integration in Ireland:	easeinteg
Opportunities for Professional Growth:	profgrowth
Perception of the Entrepreneurial Environment in Ireland:	perceptireland
Opportunities for Intrapreneurship in Current Role:	opporintrap
Satisfaction with Professional Networks:	satisnetwork
Perceived Effectiveness of These Policies:	effectgovpoli

##### ***a) Correlation between Professional Growth Opportunities (profgrowth) and Satisfaction with Professional Networks (satisnetwork)***

Based on this information, the level of correlation was determined to validate the respective hypotheses as follows:

*H0 (null hypothesis) = There is no correlation.*

*H1 (Alternate Hypothesis) = Correlation exists.*

Firstly, the hypothesis test is carried out to determine the p-value, which according to table 6 is <.001, indicating that as it is less than 0.05, there is a high level of significance in the result and H1 is validated.

Since there is a correlation between the two variables, the second step is to determine what type of correlation it is, through Pearson's R coefficient, which in this case is 0.502. This indicates that the correlation is positive and with a considerably high strength.

Correlations		profgrowth	satisnetwork
profgrowth	Pearson Correlation	1	.502**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	96.439	32.415
	Covariance	1.191	.400
	N	82	82
satisnetwork	Pearson Correlation	.502**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	32.415	43.280
	Covariance	.400	.534
	N	82	82

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Table 6. Correlation between the variables profgrowth and satisnetwork (Source: researcher)*

These results indicate that levels of satisfaction with professional networks have a direct implication and relationship with the degree of perceived opportunities for professional growth in Ireland. That is, when an immigrant manages to build professional connections in the country through networking, which are valuable and positive for their integration into Irish society, the opportunities for professional growth become greater for the immigrant and they will have not only better conditions but also a better perception of the country's ecosystem. This situation makes sense because it was mentioned earlier that one of the barriers or challenges that immigrants highlight the most for their professional integration in Ireland is networking, in the search for access to entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship opportunities in the country.

***b) Correlation between Perception of the Entrepreneurial Environment in Ireland (perceptireland) and Opportunities for Intrapreneurship in Current Role (opporintrap)***

Based on this information, the level of correlation was determined to validate the respective hypotheses as follows:

*H0 (null hypothesis) = There is no correlation.*

*H1 (Alternate Hypothesis) = Correlation exists.*



The p-value is determined, which according to table 7 is <.001, indicating that if it is less than 0.05, there is a high level of significance in the result and H1 is validated.

### Correlations

		perceptireland	opporintrap
perceptireland	Pearson Correlation	1	.584**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	61.280	43.134
	Covariance	.757	.533
	N	82	82
opporintrap	Pearson Correlation	.584**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	43.134	88.890
	Covariance	.533	1.097
	N	82	82

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Table 7. Correlation between the variables perceptireland and opporintrap (Source: researcher)*

Since there is a correlation between the two variables, Pearson's R coefficient is determined, which in this case is 0.584. This indicates that the correlation is positive and with a considerably high strength. When considering this information, it is valid to infer that when professional immigrants perceive that they have opportunities to integrate into the Irish labour market, with the aim of growing professionally, carrying out projects and innovating within organisations, the perception of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the country also increases.

This aspect is very positive, taking into account that, by integrating into the Irish labour market, professional immigrants begin to have greater opportunities to legalise their migratory situation in the medium and long term, there is a transfer of knowledge and know-how that complements their existing skills, and additionally, a crucial point such as networking, which has already been mentioned previously. All this accumulation of information and variables allows the immigrant to feel more confident when it comes to finding opportunities for entrepreneurship, for accessing investment capital, for finding

business incubators, etc. At the end of the day, the impact on the perception of the entrepreneurial ecosystem tends to be higher.

Performing the same exercise with some of the other variables, interesting results are found that tend to align with this idea.

For example, when analysing the correlation between the following variables:

*Ease of Professional Integration in Ireland (easeinteg)*

*Opportunities for Professional Growth (profgrowth)*

Calculating p-value, which according to table 8 is  $<.001$  and that indicates that being less than 0.05, there is a high level of significance in the result and H1 is validated.

Correlations		easeinteg	profgrowth
easeinteg	Pearson Correlation	1	.466**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		$<.001$
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	95.610	44.780
	Covariance	1.180	.553
	N	82	82
profgrowth	Pearson Correlation	.466**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	$<.001$	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	44.780	96.439
	Covariance	.553	1.191
	N	82	82

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Table 8. Correlation between the variables easeinteg and profgrowth (Source: researcher)*

As there is a correlation between the two variables and through Pearson's R coefficient, which in this case is 0.466, this indicates that the correlation is positive and with a moderate strength but very close to being high. Analysing these results, when immigrants have professional opportunities that allow them to access a more stable life project and these opportunities are excellent and ambitious, the ease of integrating into Ireland tends to be higher. There is a direct relationship of proportionality that nicely complements the overall analysis of how the entrepreneurial and professional integration ecosystem of immigrants in Ireland becomes more accessible, when there are opportunities for entrepreneurship, for networking, for finding support in the private sector and in Irish government programmes.

In addition to the above, the greater the opportunities to grow professionally in the country, the greater the possibility that there will be future entrepreneurship projects that favour and promote the entrepreneurial ecosystem on the island, as can be seen in the correlation between these variables, with an R of 0.461, a moderate positive correlation and with high significance according to table 9:

*Opportunities for Professional Growth (profgrowth)*

*Perception of the Entrepreneurial Environment in Ireland (perceptireland)*

**Correlations**

		profgrowth	perceptireland
profgrowth	Pearson Correlation	1	.461**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	96.439	35.415
	Covariance	1.191	.437
	N	82	82
perceptireland	Pearson Correlation	.461**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	35.415	61.280
	Covariance	.437	.757
	N	82	82

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 9. Correlation between the variables perceptireland and profgrowth (Source: researcher)

**c) Correlation between Satisfaction with Professional Networks (satisnetwork) and Opportunities for Intrapreneurship in Current Role (opporintrap)**

Based on this information, the level of correlation was determined to validate the respective hypotheses as follows:

*H0 (null hypothesis) = There is no correlation.*

*H1 (Alternate Hypothesis) = Correlation exists.*

The p-value is determined, which according to table 7 is <.001, indicating that if it is less than 0.05, there is a high level of significance in the result and H1 is validated.

Correlations		opporintrap	satisnetwork
opporintrap	Pearson Correlation	1	.470**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	88.890	29.134
	Covariance	1.097	.360
	N	82	82
satisnetwork	Pearson Correlation	.470**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	29.134	43.280
	Covariance	.360	.534
	N	82	82

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Table 10. Correlation between the variables opporintrap and satisnetwork (Source: researcher)*

With an R coefficient of 0.470, there is a highly significant moderate positive correlation on a variable that has been highlighted so far, satisfaction with professional networks. What this correlation reflects is that when an immigrant is able to access intrapreneurship opportunities, become linked to Irish organisations and make themselves known within society, it allows them to expand their social circle, or rather, their professional network. This aspect is very relevant because part of the cultural integration to the country is given in the connections and the quality of these connections that a person has. In the survey, one of the barriers or challenges that the participants highlighted the most was related to networking. Therefore, this level of correlation makes a lot of sense, as can also be seen with the variable effectgovpoli, which deals with the degree of perception of the effect of the Irish Government's policies and programmes related to immigrants.

*Satisfaction with Professional Networks (satisnetwork)*

*Perceived Effectiveness of These Policies (effectgovpoli)*

Correlations		satisnetwork	effectgovpoli
satisnetwork	Pearson Correlation	1	.491**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	43.280	21.134
	Covariance	.534	.261
	N	82	82
effectgovpoli	Pearson Correlation	.491**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	21.134	42.890
	Covariance	.261	.530
	N	82	82

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Table 11. Correlation between the variables effectgovpoli and satisnetwork (Source: researcher)*

Based on the data in Table 11, where with a p-value <0.001 and an R coefficient of 0.491, the alternative hypothesis (H1) is established with a moderate-high positive correlation and a high statistical significance. This means that, under the results obtained in the survey, there is a good perception of the policies and programmes being carried out by the Irish Government to support the immigrant community. However, the main point to highlight is their relationship with networking, complementing all the quantitative analysis already carried out so far. One of the purposes of government programmes and policies is to offer training, workshops and international events that allow citizens to access a wide range of projects, companies, job fairs, business incubators, investor funds, educational institutions with training programmes in various areas, etc., which in the end, increase the possibilities for professional immigrants to have better connections and a strong network of contacts. Hence, there is a direct effect on the satisfaction for such communities and specialised networking.

#### **4.2.5. T-Test Independent Samples**

As a final part of the quantitative analysis, the statistical tool of the T-test or T-Student was used in which a comparison is made between the means of two groups or conditions, based on independent samples. The objective is to be able to identify whether there is any difference between the means of two groups and from there, to determine the degree of relationship of a variable with the two groups.

For this case, the entire T-test was performed with 12 independent variables that are suitable for this analysis and the respective means of the two groups, male and female, were compared.

#### Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means					
		t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
				One-Sided p	Two-Sided p		
easeinteg	Equal variances assumed	-1.334	80	.093	.186	-.319	.239
		-1.353	79.849	.090	.180	-.319	.236
profgrowth	Equal variances assumed	-1.216	80	.114	.227	-.293	.241
		-1.232	79.941	.111	.222	-.293	.238
awareprog	Equal variances assumed	.070	80	.472	.944	.018	.256
		.070	79.730	.472	.944	.018	.255
eftecprog	Equal variances assumed	.456	80	.325	.650	.084	.184
		.468	76.327	.321	.641	.084	.179
interentrep	Equal variances assumed	-.729	80	.234	.468	-.208	.286
		-.732	79.399	.233	.466	-.208	.284
perceptireland	Equal variances assumed	.160	80	.436	.873	.031	.194
		.162	79.870	.436	.872	.031	.192
opporintrap	Equal variances assumed	-.761	80	.224	.449	-.177	.233
		-.764	79.330	.223	.447	-.177	.232
invprofnetwork	Equal variances assumed	-1.207	80	.115	.231	-.283	.235
		-1.221	79.996	.113	.226	-.283	.232
impnetwork	Equal variances assumed	.349	80	.364	.728	.059	.168
		.347	76.409	.365	.729	.059	.169
satisnetwork	Equal variances assumed	-1.962	80	.027	.053	-.312	.159
		-1.997	79.328	.025	.049	-.312	.156
awaregovpoli	Equal variances assumed	1.050	80	.148	.297	.272	.258
		1.062	80.000	.146	.291	.272	.256
effectgovpoli	Equal variances assumed	.118	80	.453	.906	.019	.162
		.122	73.672	.452	.903	.019	.157

Table 12. T-test for Independent Samples (Source: researcher)

The purpose of this test is to determine the following hypothesis:

*Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant difference between men's and women's ratings.*

*Alternate hypothesis (H1): There IS a significant difference between male and female ratings.*

As part of the process to validate a hypothesis, the P-value must be calculated, which must be less than 0.05 to have a high significance level and establish a relationship between the two groups, for example, validate H1 (Alternate) and continue with the respective analysis.

According to table 11, the P-value is determined by the Two-sided p column, and for each of the 12 variables evaluated the P-value is greater than 0.05. This indicates that there is not a high significance level or interesting effect, which means that there is no significant difference for each variable with the two groups, men and women. Therefore, the Null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is validated.

It is an important analysis because the main conclusion is that, between men and women, there are no major differences in the perception of professional growth in Ireland, ease of integration, perspective on the entrepreneurial ecosystem, government programmes, professional networks or opportunities for an entrepreneur or intrapreneur. It is possible to infer then that there would be a level playing field, regardless of gender, for professional immigrants coming to Ireland. This is due to the diversity of nationalities, cultures and experiences, which, together with the culture of acceptance by Irish society, means that both women and men can have equal opportunities and that this translates into a similarity in the overall perception of the country on these issues.

### 4.3. Data Presentation for the qualitative method

The next section in this process of analysis of the whole research is related to the qualitative aspect, which is fundamental to extend the in-depth analysis of certain aspects of the process of integration of professional immigrants into Irish society.

For this purpose, and in accordance with the proposed methodology, the semi-structured interview was used as the main tool. Through interviews, the researcher has the ability to obtain information beyond what has been previously extracted through quantitative analysis. In this exercise, 10 people were selected from different profiles, nationalities, experiences, roles, etc., who could express their opinions about the immigration of professionals in Ireland, its implications, their experiences, their objections or their reasoning on the issues raised.

Table 13 gives an overview of the sample selected for the interviews:

**Sample characteristics for interviews**

ID	Nationality	Background	Genre
A1	Ireland	College Lecturer	Male
A2	Ireland	Enterprise Ireland Member	Male
A3	Brazil	MSc in Marketing	Female
A4	Portugal	International Office Leader	Female
A5	Brazil	IT Professional	Male
A6	Argentina	International Agency Advisor	Female
A7	Colombia	International Agency Director	Male
A8	Mexico	Marketing Professional-Influencer	Female
A9	India	MSc in Marketing - English Teacher	Male
A10	Ireland	Teacher	Female

*Table 13. Sample characteristics for interviews (Source: researcher)*

The idea of having a diversity of nationalities in the sample is to obtain information from different perspectives. For this reason, information is obtained from the local population such as the Irish, as well as from the Latino community and additionally, European nationalities and others such as from India. Some of these people have had the experience of being immigrants in Ireland, so from their personal experience they can provide valuable insights for the research.



Another point to bear in mind is that there is an equal proportion of men and women, for example, 50% for each gender, in order to ensure participatory balance and to identify possible incidences or new related findings.

Finally, the researcher took into consideration the diversity of roles in the selected sample, because there are more and better results in the collected information. For this reason, roles such as lecturers, teachers, members of government institutions, members of universities, students and professionals in different areas or industries, among others, are found.

All the information was processed and analysed using Atlas.ti software, which allows for in-depth analysis of each interview, finding patterns, key learnings, etc.

#### **4.4. Qualitative findings**

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, seeking to analyse different issues related to the immigration of professionals in Ireland. Part of this section seeks to complement the results obtained in the quantitative study and it is for this reason that the headings are closely connected between the two methodologies with some additional points to take into account in the research.

##### **4.4.1. Professional experience, integration and opportunities**

In this section the focus was on how professional immigration is seen from different perspectives. Basically the most important thing to analyse here are those strengths and weaknesses, which professional immigrants face when they decide to come to Ireland to build their life project. Also to be considered are the barriers they are exposed to, because, generally speaking, it is never easy to leave one's place of origin to continue the development of a professional career in another country, with a new culture, new language, new processes and all that is involved in starting from scratch.

For this reason, the first part of the questions asked in the interviews were the following:

***In your opinion, what are the main strengths and weaknesses that professional immigrants bring to the Irish workforce?***

- ***Are there any perceived weaknesses related to language barriers, lack of familiarity with Irish work culture, or recognition of foreign qualifications?***

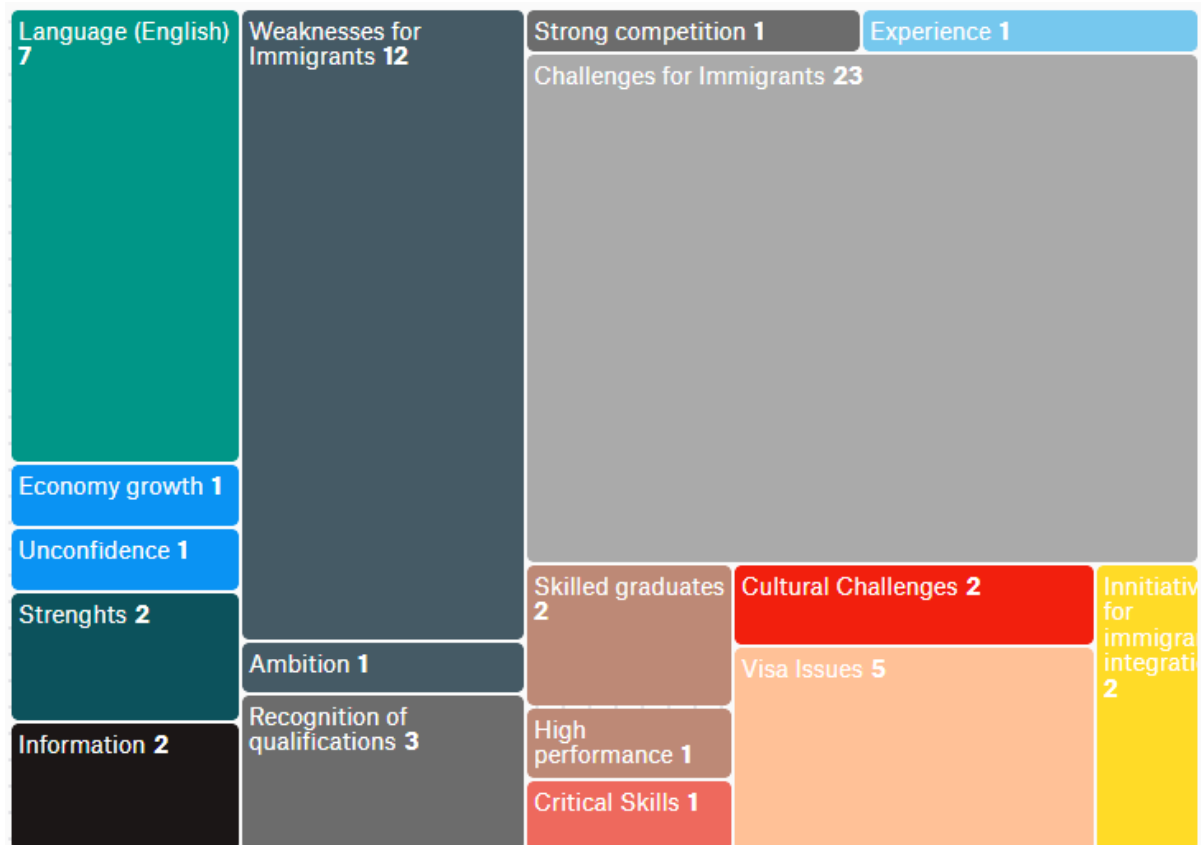


Figure 14. Treemap with concepts for question 1 (Source: researcher and Atlas.ti)

According to Figure 14, it is possible to observe a Treemap with the categories of information that were discussed with each of the interview participants. Some of the categories most frequently mentioned by the interviewees were related to challenges for immigrants, language barriers, recognition of qualifications, problems with work visas and general weaknesses faced by immigrants in Ireland.

Going deeper into the analysis, a concept cloud can be seen in Figure 15, which reflects the words or concepts that were most frequently mentioned by each of the participants. These include concepts such as language, which is very much involved in the adaptation processes of an immigrant from non-English speaking nationalities and is one of the first barriers or challenges in Ireland.

Concepts such as network, people, workforce or community are involved in the socio-cultural aspects of professional immigrants when they arrive in the country, in how they are able to integrate into Irish society, employment networks, entrepreneurial networks and, in general, the entire business ecosystem, whether they wish to follow the path of entrepreneurship or intrapreneurship.



Figure 15. Concepts Cloud View for question 1 (Source: researcher and Atlas.ti)

Analysing in even more detail the main key learnings obtained in these conversations, it is important to consider table 14, in which the essential points and concepts discussed can be observed for each participant.

In red are the concepts with frequency 1, for example, unique values, and in green are the concepts that were mentioned most frequently at a general level and that become important aspects to consider in this analysis.

One of the concepts was the ‘Language Barrier’ and it is seen as one of the main weaknesses that a professional immigrant faces when arriving in Ireland for the first time. This aspect is paramount because Ireland is one of the few countries in the European Union where the main language is English and this is a gateway for interested immigrants, who see the country as an opportunity to learn the language, improve it or even undertake higher studies to improve their professional performance. However, it is no secret that it is a challenge for those who want to be included in Irish society, including educational institutions, professional work and entrepreneurial networks. Another of the challenges mentioned has to do with housing and this is an aspect that impacts the entire population of the country. The housing crisis that Ireland has been facing for a number of years has been a challenge for both locals and professional migrants coming to the country, whether they are students or visitors.

ID	Aspects related to Question Part 1			
A1	Cultural Challenges	Professional Ladder	Language Barrier	Weaknesses
A2	Critical Skills	Skilled graduates	Challenges	Language Barrier
A3	Economy growth	Strengths	Visa Issues	Disinformation
	Visa Support	Lack of support	Lack of interest	Student Visa
A4	Language Barrier	Experience	Recognition of qualifications	Weaknesses
A5	Accommodation /Rent	Visa Issues	Language Barrier	Challenges /Weaknesses
A6	Language Barrier	Cultural Challenges	Challenges /Weaknesses	Disinformation
	Unconfidence	Lack of support		
A7	Language Barrier	Job searching	Integration	Lack of Collaboration
	No connections	Networking	Cultural Challenges	Challenges /Weaknesses
A8	Language Barrier	Skilled graduates	Strong competition	Visa Issues
	Challenges	Weaknesses		
A9	Accommodation /Rent	Experience	Recognition of qualifications	
A10	Recognition of qualifications	High Performance	Ambition	Hardworking

Table 14. Aspects related to Question Part 1 (Source: researcher)

On the other hand, another aspect discussed in the interviews was that of ‘Recognition of qualifications’ and this is perhaps one of the most sensitive points for the immigration of professionals. Several of the participants mentioned the difficulty that exists for the experience and qualifications of migrants to be formally recognised in Ireland. One of the participants said the following:

*“So experience that I had in my country isn't really considered as much and they really look for experience that you have within Ireland”. Participant A9.*

Another person expressed the following opinion:

*“You come to this country and if your qualifications aren't easily translated, then it's harder for you to get the job that you are going after because and there's other qualifications you have to have”. Participant A4*

This aspect is one of the most controversial for the professional immigrant community in Ireland, since behind the figure of being an immigrant, there is a professional with years of experience, skills and competences obtained through academic education and training. There

are different sectors of the Irish economy that still have a barrier for these profiles and this makes the whole process of integration into society even more difficult.

Another aspect that is often mentioned is the issue of visas and work permits, which are perhaps the biggest obstacles for the immigrant community in the country. This aspect lies mainly in the legal structure of the country and the regulatory framework that seeks to control the entry and exit of migrants. However, on other occasions there is a problem of lack of interest in applying the procedures on the part of companies, for example, companies that support sponsorship processes with willingness and certainty.

One of the opinions in this regard was the following:

*“They do have laws of mechanisms to help companies to hire those skilled workforce that they need, but the companies themselves lack the understanding to go through those processes”.* **Participant A3**

Companies often do not understand the visa and work permit processes, and in many cases it is a problem of clarity in the information provided by the government. Nowadays, there are technological advances to facilitate this process, but even so, there are still a large number of companies that do not know the process and, out of fear or tedium, refrain from hiring or hiring highly qualified immigrant professionals.

To complement this part of the analysis, participants mentioned other important points such as the strengths of immigrants in the country, such as experience, high performance, ambition and hard work, which are key points for integration with Irish society. Immigrant professionals have a high sense of hard work, meritocracy and a wealth of competencies and skills that allow them to adapt quickly to different environments. The process of a person starting from scratch in a new country awakens a series of soft skills that help enormously and many of these skills are recognised within the Irish community when it comes to assessing the arrival of professional immigrants in the country's businesses and companies.

#### **4.4.2. Entrepreneurship and Intrapreneurship**

In this second section, we will analyse the concepts of entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship, which are very important in this research as they are part of the process of integration of professional immigrants with Irish society. For this reason, three main questions have been developed, which will allow for an in-depth analysis of the topics based on the opinions of the participants in the interviews.

The first part of the questions were as follows:

***How important do you think entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship are for the development of Ireland's economy?***

- ***Can you elaborate on why these approaches might be particularly important?***
- ***Are there any specific sectors or industries where you see a greater need for these approaches?***

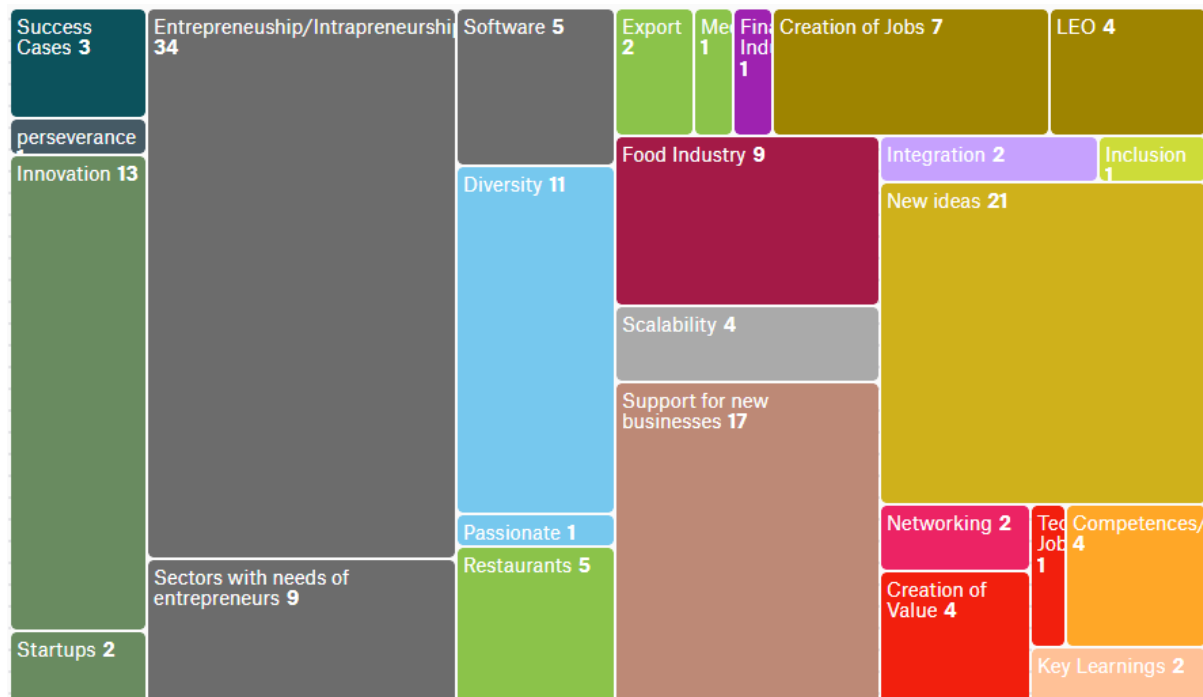


Figure 16. Treemap with concepts for question 2 (Source: researcher and Atlas.ti)

Based on the Treemap shown in figure 16, the conversations tended to discuss broad themes such as innovation, which is fundamental to the entrepreneurial processes within the country and its influence on Ireland's economic development and momentum as a strong innovation economy in the region. There was another concept such as job creation, which is one of the pillars of the Irish government's quest to promote the creation of new businesses. Aspects such as diversity were also mentioned a lot in the conversations, as it is impossible to talk about immigration in Ireland without the word diversity, due to the fact that the country has become a centre of multiculturalism and professional diversity, which has made it one of the main international destinations for students, professionals and investors, even though it is a small country with a population of only 5 million inhabitants.

ID	Aspects related to Question Part 2			
A1	Startups	New Business	Software	Creation of Value
	New Ideas	Innovation	Entrepreneurship	Intrapreneurship
	Scalability	Social Media	Networking	Technology
A2	Networking	LEO	Local Support	Export
	International Growth	Entrepreneurship	Expertise	Creation of Jobs
	Startups	Scalability	Food Industry	Software
A3	Finance	Technology	Medicine	Diversity
	Innovation			
	Restaurants	Food Industry	Diversity	New Ideas
A4	Creation of Jobs	Networking	Entrepreneurship	
	Technical Services	New Ideas	Innovation	Electricians
	New Ideas	Investment	Innovation	Financial Support
A5	Local Support	Technology	Experience	Perseverance
	Constancy	Hardworking	Scalability	
	Diversity	Inclusion	New Ideas	Food Industry
A6	Creation of Jobs	Creation of Value	Integration	Networking
	Diversity	Creation of Jobs	New Ideas	
	New opportunities	New Ideas	Food Industry	Independence
A7	Motivation			

Table 15. Aspects related to Question Part 2 (Source: researcher)

Looking more deeply into the concepts discussed and which can be seen in table 15, there are several of them that stand out. The first is related to diversity and focuses on how entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship in Ireland can promote projects led by professional immigrants, who have different experiences, nationalities and roles, etc., and that, through this, the country can benefit from this diversity of backgrounds, ideas and innovative projects. In addition, how wealth is generated through this process. One of the participants expressed the following opinion:

*“Even I have worked with several Irish people who have businesses here, such as clubs, restaurants, they have language schools and all that I think it's very very big, that is the amount of money that can enter through foreign students or people who want to undertake something here.”. Participant A8*

The second aspect is related to innovation and is linked to how the country can benefit from high-impact projects. However, it is very important that there are incentives from the public

and private sector, so that more and more people have the capacity to propose projects that will become business and entrepreneurial opportunities in the future. In this regard, one of the participants expressed the following opinion:

*“I think a lot of firms and companies have great intentions.*

*They know that this is good thing and that we need to capitalize on this and that realistically, if you have 1000 people working in an organization, a percentage of those people are gonna be naturally entrepreneurial by nature”. **Participant A1***

A third, very important aspect concerns job creation and business scalability. Entrepreneurship in Ireland must have the capacity to generate jobs and have good short, medium and long term projections. This is one of the tasks on which the Irish government seeks to focus much of its efforts. In fact, one of the most important criteria when assessing high-potential entrepreneurship projects is the level of internationalisation, in other words, export. One of the participants gives an opinion on this issue:

*“And one of the important indicators for us is not just how much exports can the business generate, but how many jobs will that create”. **Participant A2***

The interviewees also highlighted industries that have a high potential for the generation of entrepreneurial projects in Ireland, such as the technology sector with mobile applications, software, artificial intelligence; the food industry with restaurants and everything related to gastronomy, which has a high potential in Ireland due to the cultural diversity existing in the country; technical services and projects with high technical requirements, among other additional industries.

What stands out most in this conversation is that most of the participants agree that Ireland needs entrepreneurs, that it needs the work of professional immigrants with the generation of new ideas and projects with high potential, where they can encourage the promotion of startups, support with capital, with financing facilities, but, above all, with the possibility of being scalable and with global reach as long-term projections.



The second part of questions is related to the challenges, obstacles and barriers that a professional immigrant faces, if he/she wants to pursue the path of entrepreneurship or intrapreneurship.

The questions addressed in the interviews were the following:

***What are the biggest challenges faced by individuals in pursuing these paths in Ireland?***

- ***Can you differentiate between challenges faced by immigrants (access to funding, understanding legal and regulatory frameworks, building business networks) and non-immigrants?***

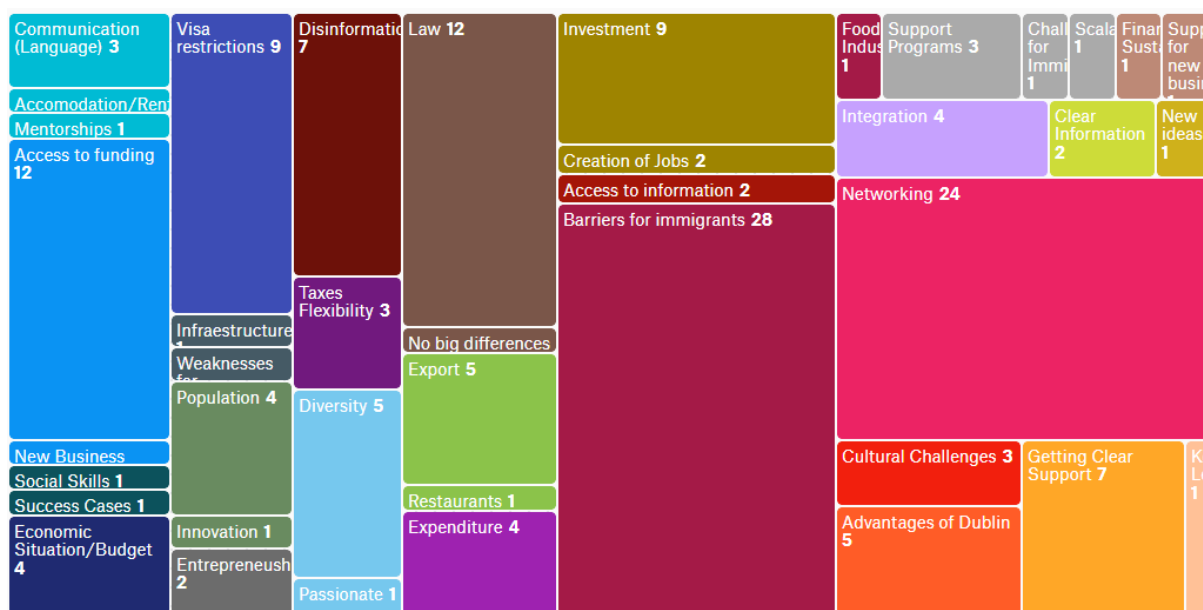


Figure 17. Treemap with concepts for question 3 (Source: researcher and Atlas.ti)

Figure 17 shows the Treemap of concepts with the frequencies. All participants mentioned different points that are of high importance in this analysis. Among the issues most mentioned by them were those related to networking, which is fundamental for the process of integration with Irish society; the existing difficulties with Visas and all those restrictions in the law for immigrants, which greatly hinder the correct performance and inclusion within the processes of entrepreneurship and participation in job opportunities at a professional level; misinformation, which is closely related to the lack of clarity in the procedures and processes within the country; challenges at the cultural level, accommodation, high cost of living, lack of support and some other aspects that complement in a very good way, all the analysis in question.

Translated with DeepL.com (free version)

ID	Aspects related to Question Part 3			
A1	Disparity	Expenditure	Integration	Networking
	Getting Support	Mentorship	Cultural Challenges	Entrepreneurship
A2	Visa Restrictions	Law Barriers	Employment	Disinformation
	Networking	Export Capacity	Law Barriers	Skills
A3	Visa Restrictions	Employment	Big Gap between populations	Interest protections
A4	Law Barriers	Access to funding	Getting Support	Visa Restrictions
	Networking	Language	Communities	Diversity
A5	Visa Restrictions	Law Barriers	Access to funding	Networking
A6	Visa Restrictions	Disinformation	Getting Support	Clear Information
	Access to funding	Loans	Bureaucracy	Language
	Economy/Budget			
A7	Law Barriers	Visa Restrictions	Entrepreneur Visa	Money
	Export Capacity	Investment		
A8	Law Barriers	Visa Restrictions	Employment	Access to funding
	Loans			
A9	Access to funding	Loans	Expenditure	ROI - Return of Investment
A10	Long job journeys	Disinformation	Visa Restrictions	Networking
	Cost of Living	Expenditure	Access to funding	Loans
	Getting Support	Networking	Taxes	Disinformation

Table 16. Aspects related to Question Part 3 (Source: researcher)

In order to analyse this issue in more depth, it is necessary to look at table 16, which strategically summarises all the information obtained from the conversations with each of the 10 participants in the study.

Firstly, there is networking. It is undoubtedly a common difficulty, or better still a life challenge, for anyone who is an immigrant not to know anyone when they are new to a country, and this does not exclude Ireland. The challenge becomes even greater if the immigrant's professional expectations include the desire to be an entrepreneur in the future or to participate in intrapreneurship processes in Irish companies. In Ireland, culturally speaking, it is essential to have connections, to build a network of contacts that allows the person to grow, to have access to privileged information, to support, to communities that serve as support for professional plans, etc.

Some of the opinions were the following:

*"I think the other challenge is probably around networks and you know knowing people knowing which agencies to go to, knowing who to talk to for advice and you know maybe let's say non nationals or international graduates may not have just that sort of."*

**Participant A2**

*"If you're being brought up here it can be a little bit kind of um you know it's about who you know and your contacts so obviously if you're from ireland originally then you might have more opportunities to actually know the other people in business or have connections basically".* **Participant A10**

Secondly, we can find the aspect of Visa, law restrictions and work permits. This is perhaps one of the most neuralgic aspects in this analysis of the barriers and challenges that professional immigrants have to face. Previously in the surveys conducted, it was possible to observe that this was the first aspect with the highest incidence among the more than 80 participants, and this is not surprising. One of the biggest challenges facing a professional migrant arriving in Ireland is the issue of immigration status. While Ireland is one of the countries that allows students to work part-time legally while studying or to obtain the 1G visa after graduation from higher education programmes to work full-time, there is still no way to obtain permission to undertake business with this type of visa. For this process it is necessary to be a permanent local resident or a European citizen, which is a major obstacle for non-European nationalities.

Some opinions on this issue:

*"Student who has graduated and has a business idea and we need to just look at the kind of the visa starters on that because when you get the two year stay back visa you have two years to you know to look for employment and then to get into a company".* **Participant A2**

Thirdly, the challenge of access to funding is a very important aspect in terms of entrepreneurship and the stimulation of business projects such as start-ups or small companies. The main problem here is that just because you are an immigrant, there is a kind

of prevention on the part of financial institutions when it comes to approving loans. The situation becomes even more complex when you consider the issue of visas and work permits. This is part of the challenges of starting a process from scratch in a country, but there are definitely differences between locals and immigrants in this area.

*“I have a friend who's Irish and he doesn't work, but he applied for a loan and he got to instantly and I as someone who is employed the first time that I applied for a credit card was rejected”. Participant A9*

Last but not least, there is the issue of misinformation. In essence, the challenge here lies in the way in which this information is disseminated, and this includes all migration processes, documentation, health, migrants' rights, support processes for entrepreneurship, business networks, access to capital or funding, etc. In many cases, this information is not very clear for professional migrants and even for the locals themselves, it is confusing and perhaps not delivered in a didactic way to the target audience. This is a big challenge for someone arriving for the first time in a country with different laws, different currency, complex and time-consuming bureaucratic processes.

*“I think that in that sense the country is not so prepared, let's say, to provide the information on a simple and understandable and simple basis”. Participant A6*

In a complementary manner, it is worth mentioning other challenges highlighted by the interviewees such as the cost of living, which is undoubtedly a complex factor in the process of adaptation of immigrants and this, added to the restrictions on work permits, the number of possible hours to work, the high cost of accommodation and culture shock, make being an immigrant a challenge in Ireland. However, as part of any process, there are stages and it is up to each professional immigrant to take a proactive approach to mastering English as the main language, building networks, participating in networking events, seeking support and advice from entrepreneurial communities, business incubators and government institutions. There are challenges, but the process is different for each professional, Ireland as a country provides tools and it is the duty of the individual, immigrant or not, to take advantage of them.

The third part of the questions relates to the skills and competences needed to be successful as an entrepreneur. This is a generic section but is very much connected to the research question of this research, as the context being evaluated is Irish. Therefore, it is important to analyse the perspective of migrants from different experiences.

***In your opinion, what are the key qualities or skills needed for success in entrepreneurship or intrapreneurship? (For example, vision, risk-taking, creativity, leadership, adaptability, financial literacy)***

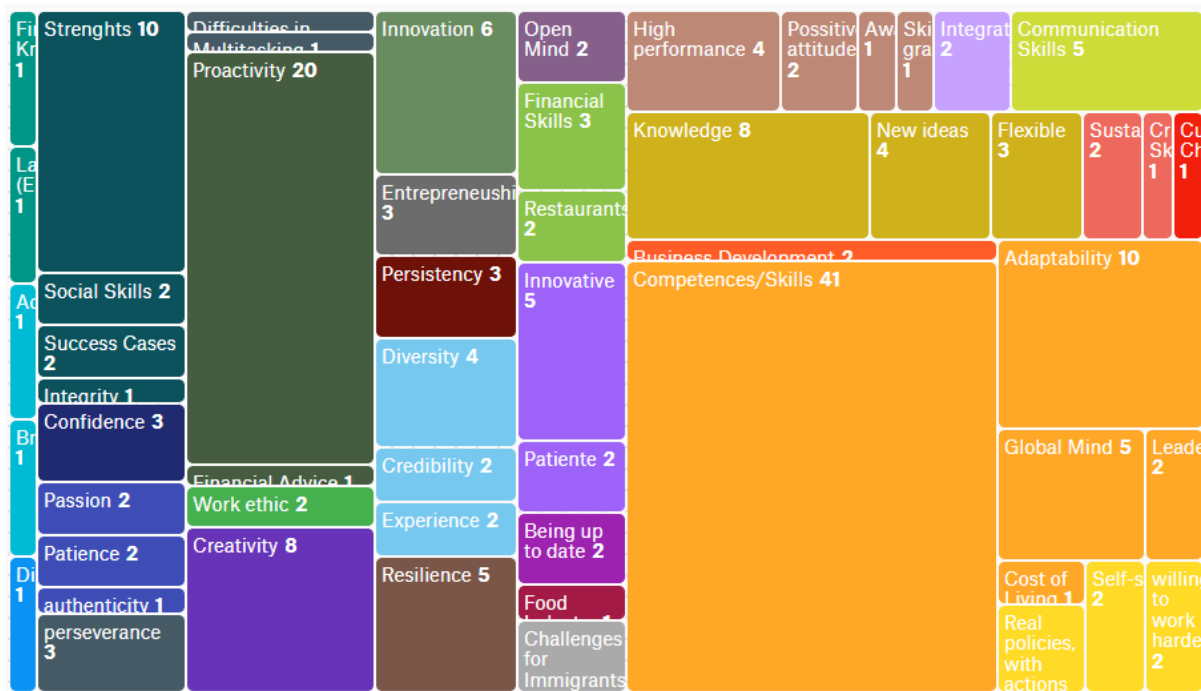


Figure 18. Treemap with concepts for question 4 (Source: researcher and Atlas.ti)

In the results obtained from the interviews, different skills and competences that each of the participants highlighted as fundamental to being a good entrepreneur, not only in Ireland but also on a global level, became evident.

In Figure 18 and Table 17, a visualisation of the data can be seen, in which there is clearly a diversity of competencies with high importance, some of them are very generic and inherent to the profile of an entrepreneur such as creativity and innovation, as the axes of business creation with the power to transform challenging environments and that there are disruptive solutions to different problems. The latter is essential for the Irish government when assessing and supporting entrepreneurship projects, as the role of exports is key to boosting this type of initiative.

Among other skills, participants highlighted proactivity and adaptability as key elements for projects to be sustainable. Today, if an entrepreneur does not have the ability to adapt to new environments, cultures, market trends and everything that impacts a business idea; it is very difficult to have a solid long-term project. Markets demand disruptive projects and even more so, projects that have the ability to respond to changing environments, hence proactivity is essential to react in time, propose solutions and never wait for problems to grow or become real potential threats to the business.

ID	Aspects related to Question Part 4			
A1	Proactivity	Experience	Self-starter	Deep Desire
	Creativity	Innovative	Integrity	Work ethic
A2	Authenticity			
	Skilled graduates	Critical Skills	High performance	Financial Skills
A3	Global Mind	Knowledge	Value Proposition	Credibility
	Innovative	Positive thinking	Adaptability	Resilience
A4	Flexibility	Proactivity		
	Communication Skills	Innovative	Hardworking	Work ethic
A5	Think outside the box	Creativity	Adaptability	Confidence
	Deep Desire	Innovative	Hardworking	Brave
A6	Creativity	Proactivity	Confidence	Resilience
	Communication Skills	Patience	Open Mind	
A7	Social Skills	Innovative	Proactivity	Hardworking
	Confidence	Open Mind	Creativity	
A8	Academic preparation	Experience	Knowledge	Perseverance
	Patience	Multitasking	Adaptability	
A9	Positive attitude	Passion	Proactivity	Financial Skills
	Being up to date	Knowledge	Innovative	Creativity
A10	Persistency	Differentiator	Adaptability	
	Innovative	Flexible	Awareness	Problem Solver
A10	Leadership	Knowledge		
	Knowledge	Creativity	Personality	Communication Skills
A10	Interpersonal Skills	Hardworking		

Table 17. Aspects related to Question Part 4 (Source: researcher)

Finally, there are two competencies or skills that were mentioned quite frequently among the participants and that are not usually highlighted when entrepreneurship is discussed. These

are experience and knowledge, both of which are absolutely fundamental for someone wishing to start a venture as an entrepreneur.

Some of the opinions in this regard were:

*“When I entered that world I knew the law, the Migration Law, and that's what allowed me to enter what I do today, then first have experience in the sector of what one is going to offer if one does not know, well really”.* **Participant A7**

It is very difficult for someone who does not have the right knowledge or the required experience to have a high probability of being a successful entrepreneur. The person has to be aware of the market they want to reach, of the technical aspects of their product, of the Value Proposition they are offering, of the internal and external aspects that can affect the sustainability of the business in the short, medium and long term. The entrepreneur must have knowledge and experience in the field he/she wants to work in. It is not a good idea to try to start something if you have not had experience in it, because you lose connection and business vision. It is very important to always surround yourself with experienced people for the business idea, never navigate alone in mysterious or unknown waters because the impact can be very big.

Finally, having financial skills was also one of the aspects that most attracted the attention of the participants, as some of them consider that knowing the business numbers, costs, expenses and financial projections, is the gap between successful entrepreneurs and those who fail in the face of internal and external factors in the business model.

#### **4.4.3. Support, policies and resources**

In this section, the purpose was to assess the aspect of policies, support structures, support programmes and other resources available to professional migrants in Ireland. The first part of the questions asked about the participants' awareness of this issue.

***Are you aware of any existing policies or support structures aimed at encouraging entrepreneurship or intrapreneurship in Ireland?***

- ***(If yes) Can you describe the specific policies or programs you are familiar with, such as government grants, business incubators, mentorship initiatives, or visa programs for entrepreneurs?***
- ***(If no) What kind of policies or support structures do you think would be most beneficial to encourage these endeavours?***

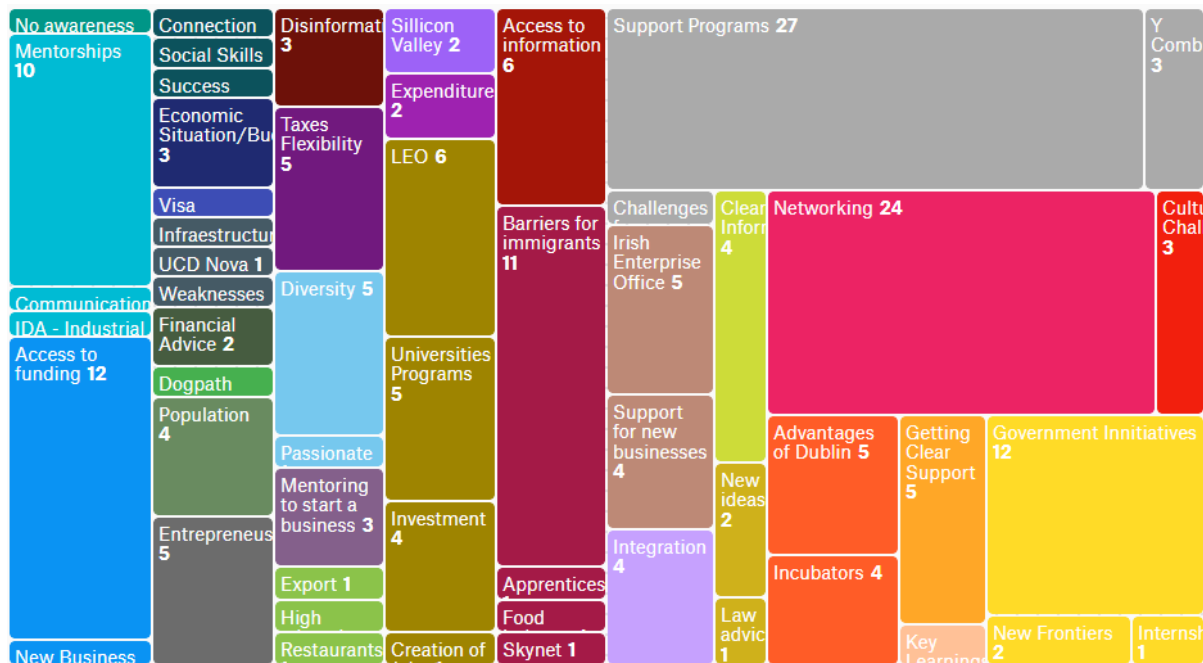


Figure 19. Treemap with concepts for question 5 (Source: researcher and Atlas.ti)

In Figure 19, you can see the Treemap of the key points that were discussed during the interview; some of the participants had knowledge about these points and managed to mention some programmes and policies in the country about access to capital, mentoring, business incubators, among other programmes. However, the majority of the participants (around 80%), had no idea about this issue and this is not uncommon, in fact, in the quantitative section with the surveys, around 70% of the sample had no knowledge or no clear idea about the existence of support programmes for professional immigrants in Ireland. This is a point to bear in mind because it may be one of the reasons why there is not a more consolidated connection between the government and the potential entrepreneurial community, especially immigrants.

Table 18 shows some of the programmes cited by the participants. It should be noted that for those who did not have any knowledge, they were asked about which programmes or policies would be ideal to promote in the country to better include professional immigrants who wish to become involved in entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship activities.

One of the most referenced institutions was Enterprise Ireland and no wonder, because it is one of the most important government institutions in terms of promoting business policy, entrepreneurship and value creation through different support mechanisms. They have something called LEO (Local Enterprise Office), which is a network of offices across the



country, whose purpose is to provide support and support to the community for early stage ventures.

*“In terms of funding, in terms of investment networking, getting expert knowledge and expertise we help them to source buyers and clients in markets”. **Participant A2***

ID	Aspects related to Question Part 5			
A1	Mentorships	Networking	Integration	Enterprise Ireland
	Startups Support	Meetup.com	UCD Nova	Universities Programmes
	Financial Advice			
A2	LEO - Local Enterprise Offices	Investment	Networking	Enterprise Ireland
	Business Incubators	Workshops	Mentorships	
A3	Taxes Flexibility	Training Programmes	Mentorships	
A4	Access to funding	Networking	Universities Programmes	Business Incubators
	Mentorships	Access to clear information	Clear Business Language	
A5	Access to funding	Flexibility in Loans	Mentorships	Training Programmes
	Networking			
A6	Flexibility in Loans	Access to funding	Business Incubators	Mentorships
A7	Business Incubators	Mentorships	LEO - Local Enterprise Offices	Dogpath Labs
	Encourage Small Businesses	Skynet	Universities Programmes	New Frontiers
A8	Mentorships	Law Advice	Access to funding	Flexibility in Loans
A9	Networking	Apprenticeships	Internships	Mentorships
	Experience Recognition			
A10	IDA - Industrial Development Authority	Taxes Flexibility	Access to clear information	Cheap Loans
	Networking	Mentorships	Training Programmes	

Table 18. Aspects related to Question Part 5 (Source: researcher)

We also found Dogpatch Labs, as an entrepreneurial ecosystem in Dublin, where it is possible to find support and support for business ideas, early stage startups and a collaborative community to boost entrepreneurial projects.

*“Dogpatch Labs, where you can put your desk there, but all the companies that are there, that are enterprising, collaborate and see how they work and say, well, I do the market study for you. Or, I do that to you and you do this to me and they grow together”.* **Participant A7**

However, there is great agreement among the participants on the following initiatives as key to enable the integration of professional migrants in entrepreneurial activities in the country. Some of them are:

- **Incubators:** as fundamental platforms for the promotion, support and backing of entrepreneurs with business ideas, who need advice, information, connections and financial support.

*“Incubator begins to receive academic support to continue growing that project, but you also begin to see a series of financial supports and possibilities”.* **Participant A7**

- **Networking:** this is undoubtedly one of the most frequently mentioned aspects of this research. The importance of networking in Ireland as part of its culture and as a platform to integrate more successfully into Irish society has been highlighted previously. This aspect is also one of the biggest challenges faced by immigrants from an early stage and is today fundamental for entrepreneurial projects.

*“what I always say is try to connect to one person you know, connect to one person in the entrepreneurship community and develop a relationship with that one person and ask them to put you in touch them with other people and that's how you build a network”.* **Participant A1**

- **Access to funding:** this is another of the most frequently cited programmes or initiatives by participants and is generally one of the biggest challenges for those wishing to start a business in Ireland. Finding investors or financial support for a project is not easy; it takes time and requires a series of requirements, including the business plan and the type of project in question. However, it is no secret that it is a major challenge for professional immigrants from different perspectives.

One of them has to do with access to bank loans, where there are obvious barriers for immigrants.

*“One is a funding system or credit system where people could get a loan or something like that to start the business with a low interest.*

*Or exactly to help business grow and start”. Participant A5*

And the other is to get support from investors:

*“I think it's sort of natural that it's easier for Irish people to know the rules for certain things, know how to secure funding a bit better and how to get around certain*

*problems or know people who to talk to”. Participant A4*

**How can policymakers ensure the long-term sustainability of support structures for immigrant entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs?**

- **Are there funding models or best practices from other countries that could be adapted to the Irish context?**

This part of the questions sought to investigate the long-term sustainability of support policies and proposals or ideas from outside the country, which could perhaps be implemented to improve the entrepreneurial ecosystem on the island, from different points of view such as political, economic, social, among others.

In Figure 20, it is possible to visualise some of the most discussed topics with some good proposals or ideas from other countries, taking advantage of the diversity in the statistical sample.

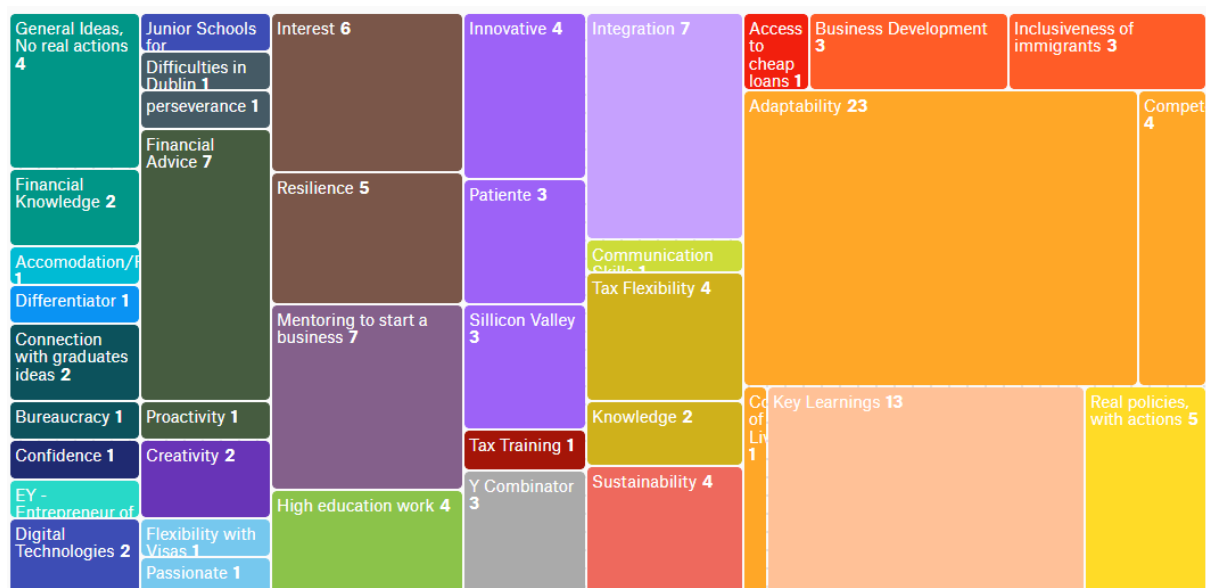


Figure 20. Treemap with concepts for question 6 (Source: researcher and Atlas.ti)

ID	Aspects related to Question Part 6			
A1	Y Combinator Model	Silicon Valley	Mentorships	Startup School
	High education work	Connection with graduates ideas	Incentivize entrepreneurial life	Too much paperwork
	Too much policies	Financial Advice		
A2	High education work	Careers Office	Connection with graduates ideas	EY - Entrepreneur of the year
A3	Tax Flexibility	Mentorships	Support to small businesses	
A4	Networking	Real actions over only ideas	Vague Policies	Accountability
A5	Mentorships	Junior Schools for entrepreneurs		
A6	Tax Flexibility	Financial Advice	Training for taxes management	
A7	Silicon Valley	Adaptability to new tendencies	Integration of communities	Networking
A8	Financial Advice	Mentorships		
A9	Inclusiveness of immigrants	Include immigrants in policymaking		
A10	Business Sustainability	Support in the first years	Financial Support	Financial Advice
	Visa flexibility	Inclusiveness of immigrants		

Table 19. Aspects related to Question Part 6 (Source: researcher)

According to table 19, some very interesting points were mentioned in relation to the aspect of sustainability that are worth highlighting.

The first of these has to do with the nature of the policies themselves, where the main problem is that these policies are often very superficial, general and do not solve the problems in depth. There is a demand for policies that stand out for their real and effective actions rather than for the mere fact that they are written on paper. In this regard, an opinion of one of the participants:

*“I find the policies that are very vague like that they throw in the words that are meant to be there, but don't give people any actual guidance on how you can achieve that or how you can incorporate that and are not very helpful”.* **Participant A4**

*“So I don't want to be overly critical, but uh, policy too much paperwork, too much policy, stifles entrepreneurship”.* **Participant A1**

Secondly, the Inclusiveness of immigrants is highlighted and is part of one of the guidelines that should be considered the most by the Irish authorities. When draft legislation, public policy proposals and support programmes for the immigrant community are being discussed, it is very important to include them in the process, to listen to them more carefully and to consider them as an essential part of the model. This is because this population represents a significant percentage of the country's population and in recent years, their presence has allowed the country to make progress in economic, social, business, innovation and today, in entrepreneurship. Therefore, it is essential to modernise policies, adapt them to the current context and allow for a more effective integration into society.

*"I'm not really aware of how they function and who's involved when making those policies, but if it's not already the case, I think that maybe they could involve more immigrants into the policymaking".* **Participant A9**

On the other hand, with regard to proposals, initiatives or points to consider in improving the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Ireland, the following points were mentioned.

The first of these was a Y Combinator model that could be promoted in Ireland. This North American model in California, USA, has enabled an abundant number of entrepreneurship projects in different sectors of the economy that have managed to transcend to global markets in a sustainable manner over time. One of the participants who mentioned this model expressed the following opinion:

*"It's brilliant and it's brilliant because it's simple and they anybody can apply right to be part of Y Combinator and they have something called Startup School.*

*Umm, you know, develop your idea, validate your idea, all of that kind of stuff, and then you pitch it and you can get investment and you can go on the Y Combinator".* **Participant A1**

With the presence of major multinationals in the country, it is a programme that could work very well in the country with strong markets such as the UK and the entire Eurozone as a potential for growth.

Secondly, participants mentioned as a programme to improve, the one related to the connection of university graduates with the business and entrepreneurship ecosystem in the

country. There is too much talent coming out of Irish universities and due to the lack of clear or better articulated policies with the sector, there is an opportunity cost that the country is assuming and it is not only a question of graduate visa, it is a matter of long-term sustainability to capture that talent with ideas or business projects, to provide the opportunity to grow in the country for the benefit of the whole Irish society.

*“I think graduates can bring a lot and just going back to the the size of the country that we have, you know, we do need talent, you know, international talent here for our economy”.*

***Participant A2***

Finally, other proposals or initiatives highlighted were those corresponding to mentoring in the initial stages of entrepreneurship projects, where professional immigrants can understand in a clear and effective way all the information related to the country, the support networks, the entrepreneurial community, how to improve networking, how to access capital and all that is necessary for the business model and its inclusion in the Irish market. In addition, participants mentioned the need to review the aspect of tax flexibility, especially in the early stages of entrepreneurship and capital support such as cheaper loans, to allow entrepreneurs to grow and not die in the early years of the business.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Key findings and interpretation

As part of the discussion process in this research, the purpose of the research must be taken into account and this is given in the way in which professional migrants are participating and integrating into the Irish ecosystem and society. Based on this origin and on the results obtained in the research, it is necessary to consider the following aspects.

#### ***Professional experience, integration and opportunities***

Although the Irish government has made progress in terms of policies and initiatives to seek better integration of immigrants in the country, as set out in its Migrant Integration Strategy (2017-2020), which establishes actions to facilitate the whole process, from access to residence, education, employment, health, among other areas (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2020), many of these actions have remained in plans or without significant progress in terms of entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship or simply in attracting skilled professional immigrants to the country. Many of these actions have remained in plans or without significant progress in terms of entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship or simply in attracting skilled professional immigrants to the country.

In the results of this research, the participants in the surveys and interviews, coming from different nationalities, have mostly encountered difficulties and barriers to a good integration in the country. It is necessary to consider that the government has programmes and initiatives focused on immigrant populations such as refugees, asylum seekers, early childhood and vulnerable populations arriving in the country (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2023).

However, there is no really clear and binding policy for the skilled professional population, those professionals who come to the country with a valuable background who do not find a clear pathway where they can feel truly valued, considering, moreover, that they are a potentially productive population for the country in terms of knowledge, experience and innovation (Macdonald and Cornacchione, 2023).

In the recent study conducted by the Irish Research Council entitled 'Enhancing Migrant Integration at local level in Ireland' (Gilmartin, 2023), many of the findings and recommendations that were established in the study with the immigrant population address these concerns at different levels. The first of these has to do with networking spaces, where

the population demands centres or hubs for migrants, where they can go for help, support, advice and information. There should be spaces to facilitate interaction, knowledge exchange and to strengthen the connection with local authorities in each of the cities in Ireland, but this interaction should be guaranteed between migrants and locals, so that integration is really productive for the country. Participants in this research highlighted networking as one of the main barriers and opportunities for improvement, as well as cultural integration, which differs from previous studies on these issues, which mentioned networking as a less problematic aspect (Person et al, 2012).

In the latter aspect, there is a need to establish resources and a real representation of the immigrant population within local government authorities (Gilmartin, 2023). Nowadays, and as part of the research findings, it is very important to find connections with the government and the private sector, but these connections become even more effective if they can be made with migrant representation in these social circles. This is perhaps one of the aspects that could have the greatest impact on the integration policy of professional immigrants, especially when it comes to entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship, enterprise, start-ups, among other areas more related to business. In addition to this, everything concerning legal documentation, visa restrictions and a lack of articulation to guarantee a better response to talent retention (Solano et al, 2020; OECD, 2019), makes the whole integration process in terms of networking and connections with local institutions more challenging for skilled immigrants.

On the other hand, one of the main problems and concerns found in this research, both qualitatively and quantitatively, is the recognition of foreign qualifications, as one of the main barriers and points for improvement by the Irish government with regard to the professional immigrant population. This is in line with previous studies, which have highlighted the frustration of skilled immigrants in Ireland that some of their qualifications are not easily recognised (Person et al, 2012). It is evident that there are professions that are not easily recognised or that will take longer than usual to obtain approval from Irish institutions, such as lawyers or areas of medicine. However, despite this there is a concern for the private sector generally, with research participants highlighting the complexity of having their professional experience and skills abroad recognised and taken seriously by companies in Ireland. It is clear that the greater the recognition of qualifications and the higher the level of education, the



better the attitude and flexibility on the part of the Irish to the integration of professional migrants (McGinnity and Kingston, 2017; Ramos et al, 2017).

This issue had previously been noted 18 years ago in other research (Barret et al, 2006), prior to the Celtic Tiger process in Ireland, where high-skilled immigrants were not being employed according to their professional background and this could potentially be explained by a lack of understanding of their training and experience on the part of the Irish authorities. While there has been progress in this area today, the research reflects that there are still gaps in this process as a barrier to entry in the effective integration of the professional immigrant.

### ***Support, policies and resources***

One of the most frequently mentioned aspects of the research, both quantitatively and qualitatively, was the availability of policies, support or assistance for professional migrants. However, the major concern of the research participants is the lack of information and clarity on what is currently on offer from the Irish government. This situation is supported by other studies (Gilmartin, 2023), where there is clearly an opportunity for improvement in the communication processes of the different institutions. Although the actions carried out by the government include support or policies to integrate immigrants into society (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2023), it is clear that the way in which this is being communicated has not been the most effective. In the area of entrepreneurship, there is an even greater lack of awareness in the community, not only among the immigrant population, but also among Irish citizens themselves. The information on the websites is not easily understandable, it is confusing and considering the technicalities involved in this area and the challenge of language, it increases the degree of confusion and lack of knowledge.

Regarding the policies and guidelines concerning the search for better integration, support, support and retention of talent in Ireland, the research reflects that in this area there are still gaps for the population of professional immigrants, the vast majority of whom arrive in the country as students and that, due to a lack of support or clarity in an inclusive policy, a very large opportunity cost is generated for the country (Lucas, 2019). Precisely, the Irish government is initiating a process of change in this matter, the first of which has to do with an update of the migrant integration strategy, which had its last update 4 years ago (2017-2020) and which, for reasons of the pandemic, had to be postponed. However, at the end of 2023 the Public Consultation process was completed by the Department of Children, Equality,

Disability, Integration and Youth (2023), in which a new and improved migrant-focused strategy is being sought.

The second process of change concerns education and innovation. In January this year, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, headed by the current Prime Minister Simon Harris, published the Global Citizens 2030 Ireland's International Talent and Innovation Strategy (DFHERIS, 2024), which focuses on six (6) pillars to work towards 2030 as follows:

1. Talent and Innovation at the heart of Ireland's global footprint
2. A first choice destination for international learners, researchers and innovators
3. Global citizens in multi-national, multi-cultural and diverse workforces
4. Enhanced European influence in education and research
5. A new level of North-South and East-West collaboration
6. Thought leadership in talent, innovation and science policy

This strategy could perhaps be the one that could trace a path from the legal framework, so that professional immigrants who come to the country can be included within the educational processes and the recognition of qualifications in the country. In which to be able to see concepts such as diversity, innovation and retention of high-skilled international talents, within the process of competitiveness of the country (DFHERIS, 2024), are great advances for the coming years.

### ***Entrepreneurship and Intrapreneurship***

The OECD (2023) had already assessed and recommended to Ireland the concern of the business sector about labour supply and the availability of skilled personnel in the country. Indeed, in one of its priority recommendations, it highlighted the need to improve the guidance and quality of information related to career planning, apprenticeships and skills enhancement for individuals in the country. This clearly aligns with the findings of this research, where participants mentioned the importance of a clear, well-informed and inclusive policy with high-skilled immigrants. Previously, other studies have shown a tendency for local citizens' attitudes towards the immigrant population to change, especially in times of crisis (Turner and Cross, 2015; Kelly et al, 2016). However, the country today and the government's initiatives have created spaces for discussion to seek inclusion and integration of the entire community.

In terms of entrepreneurship, there was a high level of concern about the lack of knowledge about these aspects among the immigrant population. Although more than 65% of the participants in this research are interested in entrepreneurship activities, this process is strongly affected in Ireland by the lack of articulation at the political level and the lack of knowledge of the existing supports. Therefore, a real ecosystem is required that favours the inclusion of this population in entrepreneurial activities (Solano et al, 2020; Murphy et al, 2020).

With the good economic performance of the country in recent years (European Commission, 2020) and considering the availability of highly skilled talent, including the professional immigrant population (Osaghae et al, 2023), it is important to mention some of the existing programmes for entrepreneurship and high-skilled immigrants, taking into account that in the research around 80% of people are not aware or do not have a clear idea of these programmes:

1. **Start-up Entrepreneur Programme (STEP):** implemented by the Irish government in 2012, its purpose is to support innovative entrepreneurial ideas and enable them to develop and stay in the country (Department of Justice, 2023). One of the conditions of the programme is that the idea must be highly innovative and disruptive. Recall that the research found that one of the requirements of institutions such as Enterprise Ireland is that a startup has a high export potential. In addition, this programme requires €50,000 in funding, which is very complex for applications made by immigrants.
2. **Enterprise Ireland:** is perhaps one of the most dedicated and focused startup support institutions in the country. Its experience, network of contacts, accelerators, incubators and offices (LEOs - Local Enterprise Offices) throughout the country, make it a great alternative to find support. The institution considers business ideas and their growth potential, rather than the nationality or origin of the entrepreneur (Enterprise Ireland, 2024).
3. **Dogpatch Labs:** is a platform, community and ecosystem of startups, international companies and entrepreneurs, located in the financial and digital heart of the city of Dublin. It is a great alternative to find support in the early stages of a business idea, establish contacts (networking), obtain financial support through investors and accelerators, etc. (Dogpatch Labs, 2024).

- 4. Guinness Enterprise Centre (GEC):** is an entrepreneurial superhub founded in 2000 and located in the centre of Dublin. Its purpose is to support businesses and empower entrepreneurs to grow and scale businesses through a range of support to competitively access the market. It is another great option to get early stage support, increase networking, access funding opportunities and specialist advice (Guinness Enterprise Centre, 2024).

All of the above-mentioned information allows us to establish the challenge for professional migrants of not having such information and the lack of knowledge of the host country's labour market (Pearson et al, 2012; Kelly et al, 2016).

## **5.2. Implications**

This study contributes to the understanding of the dynamics of entrepreneurial activity in Ireland, with special emphasis on the professional immigrant population and on all issues related to the processes of integration into Irish society.

The research is of interest to different actors involved in this issue, such as the government in its different departments and institutions, universities, private sector companies, associations or communities of entrepreneurs, immigrant groups and the entire professional population of students, graduates and residents in the country.

The findings of this research support the idea that highly skilled local and international talent is of great importance to Ireland's economic sustainability. The promotion of entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship are central to the government's policy agenda and it is therefore valuable to understand the diversity and inclusiveness of the island's resident population.

Finally, this research reflects different concerns and factors on the part of the professional immigrant community, which can serve as a basis for better understanding the current situation and how external actors can take these insights, to coordinate better strategies in building more effective policies.

## **5.3. Limitations of the study**

Limitations are a common element in academic research, in terms of data, cultural diversity, methods, etc., (Saunders et al, 2019).

Despite the quality of the information and the diversity of the data, there are some limitations that are worth bearing in mind. The first of these has to do with the quantitative part and is

given in the size of the sample, which although it had a high participation (N=82) and a diversity in profiles, opinions and a correct balance in the gender proportion; it is still a sample that could be larger, with the purpose of covering a greater number of opinions. Additionally, it would have been very enriching to go into depth on certain aspects of the questions, but the time limitation of each survey did not allow for this.

The second limitation has to do with the qualitative part, where the sample (N=10) is small to cover different topics related to entrepreneurship, immigration and inclusion in Irish society. Although each interview lasted on average 50 minutes, there were some questions or topics that were not possible to cover in greater depth. Diversity was sought in the participants and this is a very positive point. However, greater participation allows for more and better insights to be gained for such sensitive research.

Finally, the research was largely based on Dublin as an ecosystem, which may affect some of the results in terms of perceptions and additionally, the lack of previous research related to this topic is another limitation, since there is not much research on entrepreneurship involving the professional immigrant community.

## 6. Conclusions and recommendations

### 6.1. Overall conclusions

One of the main purposes of this research was to understand, from a multidimensional point of view, the whole process involved for a professional immigrant in accessing entrepreneurship opportunities, intrapreneurship and effective integration with Irish society. The results and findings of this study allow us to conclude the following:

1. The immigration process for highly skilled professionals still faces major challenges in terms of legal documentation for obtaining work and residence permits, as well as barriers in the recognition of foreign qualifications by institutions in Ireland. While there is progress from the government, there are still obstacles from the private and business sector to validate the experience and training of professional immigrants.
2. Networking is one of the most critical aspects of successful integration into Irish society. In the first years, building a network of contacts represents a challenge for professional immigrants arriving in the country, on the one hand, due to a clear language challenge and, on the other hand, evidently the difficulty involved in getting involved in local business ecosystems, which can take months or years to achieve.
3. Information regarding policies, support structures, resources and other forms of support for entrepreneurial activity in Ireland is not very clear in terms of means of access, updating, language and, in general, this means that the professional immigrant population is not aware of the existing initiatives and institutions and, therefore, cannot take advantage of the resources in a more effective way.
4. While the Irish government has been flawed in the recent construction of a migrant integration strategy, there has been no update on this for the past four years. As of 2024, progress began to be seen in different government departments, such as the Global Citizens 2030 strategy and the Public Consultation for the definition of the national strategy for the integration of the migrant population. It is hoped that clearer guidelines will be issued that take into account the issues mentioned in this research in terms of inclusion, recognition of qualifications, entrepreneurship, work permits and critical skills in the business sector.
5. There is a need from the immigrant population for greater representation of their communities in the country's local authorities. This is so that there is a deeper

understanding of their needs and problems, and so that each of them can be addressed in a more effective way that benefits both parties. The country's cultural diversity means that this is a critical aspect for government institutions to consider.

6. Ignorance among the immigrant professional population is very high regarding the different programmes, support and assistance available in Ireland. This phenomenon can be explained by the lack of clear information and promotion to this public. In addition, it is also a consequence of the absence of a career guidance and career plan in line with what the country needs.

However, in terms of entrepreneurship, the availability of tools and support platforms is very wide with programmes such as STEP, the existence of institutions such as Enterprise Ireland (EI) or entrepreneurship ecosystems such as Dogpatch Labs, Guinness Enterprise Centre, Skynet, UCD Nova, New Frontiers, among others.

## **6.2. Recommendations and Future Research**

As a first part of the recommendations and taking into account the results of this research, the following is proposed:

- Include the immigrant population in the processes of creating policies and strategic guidelines. That is to say, to have representation in debates and discussions in legal bodies, in such a way that understanding of this population is improved and policies are more precise and in line with the country's needs in this area.
- Establish support centres or hubs for highly qualified immigrants, where they can find guidance, information and support in the process of studies, innovation, entrepreneurship and everything related to their professional integration in the country.
- Update and improve the information in the different government communication channels, in reference to the support and assistance for professional immigrants. In such a way as to mitigate the lack of knowledge and ignorance regarding the steps to follow, the guidance to engage in entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship activities.
- Promote more effective networking events, to facilitate the networking process and more direct interaction with local authorities, business and entrepreneurship ecosystems, and Irish citizens.

- Maintain good relations and sustain the positive attitude towards the immigrant population, especially the highly skilled immigrant population in the country, in order to enhance the integration process for the benefit of both parties and the development of the country as a whole.

Secondly, with regard to future research, I consider the following to be important:

- Conduct quantitative research with a larger population sample, not only in Dublin but also in other cities in the country. This is in order to improve the accuracy of the information and to be able to have greater insights that cover the whole nation.
- By conducting semi-structured interviews with a larger population and including more stakeholders, it will be possible to obtain valuable and accurate information on certain topics related to entrepreneurship and immigration of professionals.
- Within the key questions and points addressed in this research, there are additional variables that should be analysed as part of the research. Going more in-depth on entrepreneurship in different cities in Ireland would be a great starting point in building a more accurate policy in the country.
- Including the business sector to a greater extent in this research should be part of future studies, as there is not enough previous information on the opinion and perception of the business sector on the immigration of professionals, technical requirements, critical skills demanded and everything concerning entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship. I believe that this is an actor that has not yet been well addressed and that it is important to know it in this area.



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## Appendices

### *Appendix I. Consent Form – Participation in the Research*

#### **The professional immigrants' potential and their connection with the dynamics of entrepreneurship in Ireland: From policy to practice, case study in Dublin**

##### **Consent to take part in research**

**Name:**

- I confirm my voluntary participation in this research study
- I have the right to withdraw from this study at any time, and there will be no penalty for doing so. This means I can stop participating at any point, even if I have already started. I can also choose not to answer any question I do not feel comfortable with.
- I can change my mind about sharing my interview data. Within two weeks of the interview, I can let the research team know if I no longer want my data used. If I do, they will remove all the interview material.
- The purpose and nature of this study have been explained to me in writing. I have also had the opportunity to ask questions about the study to ensure I understand it fully.
- By participating in this study, I understand that I will be discussing my experience. This will involve sharing my story and providing my point of view and opinions on the research topics.
- I understand that my participation in this research will not directly benefit me.
- I understand that the interview will be recorded with video or audio. I consent to this recording.
- I understand that all the information I share in this study will be kept confidential.
- I understand that my participation in this research will be completely anonymous. This means any reports or publications based on the study will not identify me in any way. The researchers will achieve this by changing my name and removing any details from my interview that could reveal my identity or the identity of the people I discuss.
- I understand that some parts of my interview might be used in the researcher's final report, but they will be changed first to hide my identity and anyone else's I talk about.
- I understand that if, during the interview, I disclose information suggesting that myself or someone else is at risk of harm, the researcher may be required to report this to the appropriate authorities. The researcher will discuss this situation with me first, but they may be legally obligated to report it even if I do not give my permission.
- I understand that my signed consent form and the original audio recording of the interview will be stored on Microsoft Teams and Office 365. These platforms are

managed by the National College of Ireland, which has security measures in place to protect my data

- I understand that a transcript of my interview, with all identifying information removed, will be kept for two years.
- I understand that under freedom of information laws, I have the right to access the information I provided for this study at any time while it is stored, as described above.
- I understand that I am welcome to contact any of the researchers involved in this study to ask further questions or for more information.

William Andres Quintero Bautista  
MSc in Entrepreneurship  
[x23110961@student.ncirl.ie](mailto:x23110961@student.ncirl.ie)  
National College of Ireland

Signature of research participant \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of researcher  
*I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study*

Signature of researcher \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_



**Appendix II. Survey structure for the quantitative methodology****Survey Structure****Section 1: Demographic Information**

1. **Age Group:**
  - 18-24
  - 25-34
  - 35-44
  - 45-54
  - 55-64
  - 65 and above
2. **Gender:**
  - Male
  - Female
  - Non-binary/Third gender
  - Prefer not to say
3. **Nationality:**
  - Irish
  - Non-Irish (Please specify country)
4. **Years in Ireland:**
  - Less than 1 year
  - 1-3 years
  - 4-6 years
  - 7-10 years
  - More than 10 years
5. **Current Status:**
  - Student
  - Employed professional
  - Entrepreneur
  - Unemployed
  - Other (Please specify)

**Section 2: Professional and Educational Background**

1. **Highest Level of Education Completed:**
  - High school or equivalent
  - Bachelor's degree
  - Master's degree
  - Doctoral degree
  - Other (Please specify)
2. **Field of Study/Profession:**
  - Engineering/Technology
  - Business/Management
  - Arts/Humanities
  - Social Sciences
  - Health Sciences
  - Other (Please specify)
3. **Current Employment Status:**
  - Full-time employed

- Part-time employed
- Self-employed
- Unemployed
- Student
- Other (Please specify)

### **Section 3: Integration and Opportunities**

#### **1. Ease of Professional Integration in Ireland:**

- Very easy
- Easy
- Neutral
- Difficult
- Very difficult

#### **2. Opportunities for Professional Growth:**

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Very poor

#### **3. Main Challenges Faced (select all that apply):**

- Language barriers
- Recognition of qualifications
- Networking difficulties
- Cultural differences
- Legal/visa issues
- Other (Please specify)

### **Section 4: Support and Resources**

#### **1. Awareness of Support Programs for Immigrants:**

- Very aware
- Somewhat aware
- Neutral
- Slightly aware
- Not aware at all

#### **2. Effectiveness of Available Support Programs:**

- Very effective
- Effective
- Neutral
- Ineffective
- Very ineffective

#### **3. Types of Support Utilized (select all that apply):**

- Mentorship programs
- Networking events
- Financial support/grants
- Training/workshops
- Legal assistance
- Other (Please specify)

### **Section 5: Entrepreneurship and Intrapreneurship**

#### **1. Interest in Entrepreneurship:**

- Very interested
  - Interested
  - Neutral
  - Slightly interested
  - Not interested at all
2. **Participation in Entrepreneurial Activities:**
- Currently own a business
  - Have owned a business in the past
  - Planning to start a business
  - No interest in starting a business
3. **Perception of the Entrepreneurial Environment in Ireland:**
- Very supportive
  - Supportive
  - Neutral
  - Unsupportive
  - Very unsupportive
4. **Opportunities for Intrapreneurship in Current Role:**
- Excellent
  - Good
  - Fair
  - Poor
  - Very poor

## **Section 6: Community and Networking**

1. **Involvement in Professional Networks/Communities:**
- Very involved
  - Involved
  - Neutral
  - Slightly involved
  - Not involved at all
2. **Impact of Networking on Professional Development:**
- Very positive
  - Positive
  - Neutral
  - Negative
  - Very negative
3. **Satisfaction with Professional Networks:**
- Very satisfied
  - Satisfied
  - Neutral
  - Dissatisfied
  - Very dissatisfied

## **Section 7: Policy and Recommendations**

1. **Awareness of Government Policies Supporting Immigrant Professionals:**
- Very aware
  - Somewhat aware
  - Neutral
  - Slightly aware

- Not aware at all

2. **Perceived Effectiveness of These Policies:**

- Very effective
- Effective
- Neutral
- Ineffective
- Very ineffective

3. **Areas for Policy Improvement (select all that apply):**

- Recognition of foreign qualifications
- Access to funding
- Networking opportunities
- Legal/visa support
- Cultural integration programs
- Other (Please specify)

**Conclusion**

1. **Willingness to Participate in Future Studies:**

- Yes
- No

2. **Additional Comments/Suggestions** (optional text box)

This survey structure covers various aspects of the professional and entrepreneurial experiences of immigrants in Ireland. By using closed-ended questions, you can easily analyse the data and identify patterns using descriptive statistics. Google Forms is a suitable tool for this, as it allows for efficient data collection and basic analysis.

**Appendix III. Interview structure for the qualitative methodology****Interview Structure: The Potential of Professional Immigrants in Ireland**

**Name of participant:**

**Date:**

**Introduction (2 minutes)**

- Briefly introduction of my research project and myself.
- Explanation of the purpose of the interview and how the information will be used.
- Obtain informed consent from the interviewee.

**Background (5 minutes)**

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your role in Ireland? (Student, professional, government staff, etc.)
2. **For immigrants:** When and why did you come to Ireland?
  - Can you talk about the specific challenges or opportunities you anticipated in coming to Ireland (For example, cultural differences, language barriers, job market opportunities, access to education)?
  - How has your experience of living and working in Ireland compared to your expectations (For example, social integration, work-life balance, professional satisfaction, career advancement opportunities)?

**Professional Experience and Integration – (For Immigrants) (7 minutes)**

1. In your opinion, what are the main strengths and weaknesses that professional immigrants bring to the Irish workforce?
  - How do these strengths contribute to innovation, problem solving, or team dynamics?
  - Are there any perceived weaknesses related to language barriers, lack of familiarity with Irish work culture, or recognition of foreign qualifications?
2. How has your background and experience been recognized and utilized in your work environment (or studies) in Ireland?
  - Have you encountered any challenges in getting your skills and experience recognized by employers or educational institutions (For example, difficulty translating qualifications, lack of awareness of foreign credentials, unconscious bias)?
  - How can these challenges be overcome to ensure the full utilization of immigrant talent?

**Entrepreneurship and Intrapreneurship (10 minutes)**

1. Are you familiar with the concepts of entrepreneurship (starting your own business) and intrapreneurship (innovation within an existing organization)? (Briefly explain if needed)
2. How important do you think entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship are for the development of Ireland's economy?
  - Are there any specific sectors or industries where you see a greater need for these approaches?
3. What are the biggest challenges faced by individuals in pursuing these paths in Ireland?
  - Can you differentiate between challenges faced by immigrants (access to funding, understanding legal and regulatory frameworks, building business networks) and non-immigrants?
  - How do these challenges impact the overall rate of entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship?
4. In your opinion, what are the key qualities or skills needed for success in entrepreneurship or intrapreneurship? (for example, vision, risk-taking, creativity, leadership, adaptability, financial literacy)
  - How can educational institutions or support organizations better equip individuals with the skills and knowledge needed for these paths?

**Policies and Support Structures (10 minutes)**

1. Are you aware of any existing policies or support structures aimed at encouraging entrepreneurship or intrapreneurship in Ireland?
  - (If yes) Can you describe the specific policies or programs you are familiar with, such as government grants, business incubators, mentorship initiatives, or visa programs for entrepreneurs?
  - (If no) What kind of policies or support structures do you think would be most beneficial to encourage these endeavours?
2. How can policymakers ensure the long-term sustainability of support structures for immigrant entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs?
  - Are there funding models or best practices from other countries that could be adapted to the Irish context?

**Dublin Case Study (5 minutes)**

1. What are your observations on the overall environment in Dublin for pursuing entrepreneurial or intrapreneurial endeavours?

- Are there specific aspects of the Dublin ecosystem that are particularly helpful or hindering?
- 2. Can you share any examples of successful immigrant entrepreneurs or intrapreneurs in Dublin?
  - What factors contributed to their success, and what insights can we learn from their experiences?

**Concluding Questions (2 minutes)**

1. Do you have any additional thoughts or suggestions related to the professional potential of immigrants in Ireland?

**Thank the interviewee for their time.**