Beat: Politics

EMPOWERING 101 WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS: THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT & BPI FRANCE STEP UP

30 UNICORNS EMERGED THANKS TO BPI

Paris, Washington DC, 21.06.2025, 08:29 Time

USPA NEWS - In a time of global economic shifts and accelerating innovation, Bpifrance France's public investment bank plays a pivotal role in fostering entrepreneurial growth. Established in 2012, Bpifrance supports companies at all stages of development, from startups to large industrial groups. As of 2024, it has invested over €60 billion in the French economy and supports more than 200,000 businesses annually through financing, guarantees, and equity investments.
Notably, Bpifrance has been a key player in the rise of French Tech, backing several digital startups that have grown into unicorns (companies valued at over $1 billion). As of 2025, more than 30 French unicorns have emerged, many nurtured by early-stage support from Bpifrance, strengthening France's leadership in European innovation.

POLITICAL TO MEET ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTION
Against this backdrop, the French government is stepping up its commitment to gender equality and inclusive economic development. On June 21, the Prime Minister welcomed the 101 Women Entrepreneurs 2025 laureates at Hôtel de Matignon (Prime Minister office) . The event was held in the presence of Aurore Berge, Minister Delegate for Gender Equality, Astrid Panosyan-Bouvet, Minister in charge of Labour and Employment, and Nicolas Dufourcq, CEO of Bpifrance.
The 101 selected entrepreneurs, each supported by at least one business creation or development structure, were chosen from nearly 900 applicants by regional juries. All are in the early stages of their entrepreneurial journey, whether launching or taking over a company less than three years old. Their projects span every corner of France's metropolitan and overseas territories, reflecting the country's rich geographic and cultural diversity. Together, they now form the new cohort of the Coq Crea community, the emblem of creators and innovators supported by the Cap Crea collective. Among them, 18 regional "coup de cœur" winners received special recognition.

During two intensive days of collaborative work (June 16–17 in Paris), the laureates benefited from tailored expertise, mentorship, financial engineering support, and inspirational networking, including with alumni from the 2024 edition—creating bridges of solidarity and experience among women founders.

"These 101 women entrepreneurs come from each of the 101 French departments (Disrticts): it is proof that talent is neither more urban than rural, nor more Parisian than territorial, nor more metropolitan than overseas. At a time when our country faces complex budgetary challenges, we can only build the future if we support our economic activity and give all women the opportunity to create, lead, and contribute to the productive vitality of our nation. It is a great source of pride to welcome these promising entrepreneurs to Matignon!"
François Bayrou, French Prime Minister

A MODEL OF MESURABLE IMPACT AMID BPI/ MINISTRY OF EQUALITY
The first edition in 2024 already showed strong outcomes:
• 97% of participants said they would recommend the program to other women,
• 83% reported greater self-confidence and stronger professional capabilities.
With this success, the Ministry of Equality and Bpifrance have renewed their commitment by launching a 2025 edition of the competition. The initiative falls within the government's broader agenda to empower women across all territories and to highlight the tools and networks available to support their entrepreneurial ambitions.

"Supporting and promoting female entrepreneurship is essential if we are to double the number of entrepreneurs in France. Diversity in general, and women's entrepreneurship in particular, are major drivers of progress and competitiveness. At Bpifrance, we believe in

the power of this competition to celebrate women's talent and determination, strengthen their self-confidence, and elevate their ambition. Through this visibility, we aim to encourage more women to launch businesses and inspire new entrepreneurial vocations. Their success is our success, and their vision is our future." Nicolas Dufourcq, stated CEO of Bpifrance.

A CRITICAL BLIND SPOT: NO WOMAN WITH DISABILITIES WAS ENROLLED IN THIS PROGRAM

A brief review of the 101 laureates reveals a stark reality: none appear to be women with disabilities. While these high-achieving entrepreneurs rightly deserve recognition, this omission highlights a persistent "double penalty" in France, where women with disabilities face both gender and disability discrimination. They are twice as likely to be unemployed compared to other women, yet they remain significantly underrepresented in entrepreneurship and almost absent from high-visibility initiatives such as this one.

Legislation exists: since 11 February 2005, all firms with 20+ employees must allocate at least 6% of their workforce to people with disabilities yet implementation remains weak. Employment rates for disabled women are under 50%, versus about 72% for non-disabled individuals. Even in tech, a vital frontier of innovation, women founders are already a minority; add disability to the equation, and the presence becomes almost infinitesimal. Data on disabled women entrepreneurs in tech is notably scarce, and Bpifrance's publicly promoted success stories seldom include them.

This reflects more than oversight: it points to systemic inertia. Despite France's robust legal framework (Simon Veil Act 1975, 2005 Disability Act), disabled women are rarely chosen, encouraged, or funded. If we are serious about equality and unlocking untapped economic potential, this blind spot must be addressed. Future editions of the "101 Women Entrepreneurs" competition would send a powerful message by actively including and celebrating founders with disabilities, aligning rhetoric with real inclusion.

LOOKING AHEAD, SCALLING UP SOCIAL IMPACT AND INCLUSION

The 101 Women Entrepreneurs initiative is more than a competition, it's a long-term investment in economic equity, innovation, and national cohesion. By placing gender inclusion at the heart of its strategy, the French State is not only advancing equality, but also boosting the country's collective resilience.

In this dynamic ecosystem where talent is everywhere, France continues to act decisively to ensure that all women, from every region and background, have the means to succeed. This is how new companies are born, jobs are created, and the economy is future-proofed, with women fully at the helm.

As the global economy continues to evolve, France stands committed to ensuring that women play a central role in shaping its entrepreneurial future, from digital innovation to industrial transformation. The success of these 101 laureates is not an endpoint, but a launchpad toward greater inclusion, sustainable growth, and economic sovereignty.

The program proudly carries the name "All Equal". A beautiful slogan on paper. In practice, however, it seems that the 17% of the global population living with disabilities were quietly left off the guest list. One might say inclusion is a noble concept, especially when it fits nicely in a headline. But when it comes to women with disabilities, visibility tends to vanish. Yet a disabled woman is, first and foremost, a woman, not a checkbox, not a symbol, and certainly not a footnote. Inclusion cannot be partial. Either we are "all equal", or the slogan needs rewriting.

Wake up, France, it is time to catch up with Disability Inclusion, which must also mean embracing disabled women, a minority that does count !

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-25788/empowering-101-women-entrepreneurs-the-french-government-und-bpi-france-step-up.html

Editorial office and responsibility:
V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDStV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Rahma Sophia RACHDI

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:
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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619