

Investing in gender balanced teams to drive performance, a profile of SISTAFUND

With #QVCS, Maddyness profiles different funds to give founders and entrepreneurs the information they need to choose the right investor. Today, we speak to Tatiana Jama, founder and Managing Partner at SISTAFUND.

Temps de lecture : minute

8 April 2024

Launched in October 2022, SISTAFUND is a European investment fund with a target of €100M, dedicated to advancing equality by funding exceptional women founders and gender-balanced teams.

Its inception traces back several years, as SISTAFUND is deeply connected to the SISTA NGO that I co-created back in 2018.

SISTA has been committed to bring forth a generation of diverse leaders by bridging the funding gap between female and male entrepreneurs. Some of SISTA's initiatives include supporting and federating entrepreneurs, as well as producing data to shed light on the causes of this funding gap. The creation of SISTAFUND marks a further step in SISTA's mission - after reflecting, data structuring, and bringing entrepreneurs together, SISTAFUND goes further to participate directly in the reduction of this funding gap by financing bold entrepreneurs.

As of today, we are on a great path to close our fundraising target at the end of the year, our team expanded with the addition of Isabelle Gallo, as Managing Partner, alongside myself back in October 2023 and we have

already invested in six companies so far. More importantly, with SISTAFUND, we take action to further prove what studies have already shown: an egalitarian investing approach is linked to better financial performance.

You were selected as a finalist for Focal Deploy - how do you think this will change the VC/LP landscape?

Focal Deploy presents a unique opportunity to facilitate connections between Limited Partners (LPs) and General Partners (GPs) who may not have crossed paths otherwise. Accessibility is paramount in this ecosystem, both for founders but also for general partners of funds.

To put it in perspective, studies show that a founder introduced to a fund through warm connections has a staggering 13 times higher chance of securing fundraising compared to reaching out with a cold email. It's highly plausible that GPs and their funds experience similar dynamics.

Moreover, the opacity surrounding LPs contrasts with the greater transparency often observed among VCs in this ecosystem. This added layer of complexity underscores the significance of platforms like Focal Deploy in bridging these gaps and fostering meaningful collaborations.

Which industries are you working in?

First and foremost, it's crucial to emphasise that our investment focus is exclusively on companies led by women or gender-balanced teams, where women hold a minimum of 30% of the founders' shares.

Geographically speaking, we invest mainly in France, followed by the rest of Europe, including the UK, and with feet on the ground in Spain with

Isabelle being in Barcelona.

While we follow an agnostic approach, we have a few key investment sectors at heart: the future of Healthtech, Next-generation Fintech and Insurtech, Sustainability and Frontier Tech. We have hand-picked those sectors for two reasons: firstly, they resonate strongly with our team's expertises and passions; secondly, our LP community, composed of entrepreneurs, brings invaluable knowledge and expertise to these areas. By investing in the fund, they also commit to invest time through active engagement towards our portfolio companies and potential ones during due diligence.

What do you look for in a founder?

Founders assessment is a pivotal focus within the fund, and we're actively engaged in refining our approach. Stay tuned for updates in the coming months.

However, to answer this question, we seek visionary entrepreneurs who dare to challenge the status quo, dismantle outdated biases, and reshape the world within our key investment domains. We also approach this search with meticulous attention to our own investment biases, a subject extensively explored by the SISTA NGO.

We're on the lookout for founders who are catalysts for change, influencing how people live, work, connect, and more. We seek founders for whom we want to work for, those whose unique strengths and superpowers inspire us but also the rest of the world.

Can you talk about your current portfolio?

To date, we've proudly invested in six remarkable startups, each exemplifying the core values of SISTAFUND. To name a few:

Optimiz Construction challenges the construction industry by offering a solution for optimising the cutting and installation of steel materials. It helps construction companies improve their environmental and financial efficiency; saving time, money and CO2. On top of bringing a unique blend of technical and business skills, its founder, Marion succeeded in two years, to establish her brand, Optimiz Construction, as a key player in the very traditional building industry, with over 50 projects completed with major construction companies as well as with SMEs.

The Exploration Company challenges the traditional space industry, aiming to make space exploration affordable, accessible, and open. Their flagship project, Nyx, is a modular and reusable orbital vehicle that challenges giants like Elon Musk's SpaceX. Led by visionary CEO H el ene Huby, who brings a wealth of experience from positions such as Director of Innovation at Airbus Defence & Space and Vice President of Space Strategy, the company secured a groundbreaking €200M contract with Axiom, a leading player in the American space industry.

Female Invest, a Danish company founded by Anna-Sophie Hartvigsen, Camilla Falkenberg, and Emma Bitz, is bridging the financial gender gap by combining financial education with technology. Their platform empowers women with the tools and knowledge needed to take control of their finances. Female Invest has garnered impressive consumer performance and commercial traction, amassing over 250,000 followers on social media, with over 60,000 paying customers.

What does the future look like?

The future looks full of promises, yet it looks challenging. But mostly the future looks (more) equal.

With new technology trends emerging daily, there's an abundance of topics to discuss, but one that demands our attention is undoubtedly AI.

While AI has been around since the 1950s, it is fair to say that we stand today at the forefront of an unavoidable technological revolution, propelled by the sudden emergence of generative AI. An AI revolution characterised by its ease of use, speed, realism and model capabilities, impacting every aspect of life.

As recently highlighted in the report by the Artificial Intelligence Commission (French Government), I firmly believe that France must take proactive steps to claim its position and assert itself as a formidable advocate and competitor in the AI landscape. We must foster an environment conducive to collective ownership of AI, invest in comprehensive training for all, and harness AI's potential for the betterment of public and private sectors.

While we've already invested in companies like Vizzia, utilising AI to combat illegal deposits through AI-powered cameras, it's evident that we will also focus in the next months, on companies powered by AI across our different investment verticals.

What makes SISTAFUND different?

At SISTAFUND, we firmly believe in the power of diversity as a catalyst for performance. It's a belief supported by a wealth of evidence, however we are different in our proactive approach to targeting this untapped market of exceptional, diverse leaders. What sets us apart is hence our inherent commitment to diversity and on how we do it: being the largest

gender lens fund in Europe, and one of the only to adopt a quantified gender-balanced investment approach (through the 30%, versus only having the criteria to have one woman in the team, regardless of our ownership).

Compared to many impact funds, we hence not only target solely the

environmental (E) aspect of the ESG triptych but also the social (S) dimension. And we believe it's time to give it its proper attention.

What one piece of advice would you give founders?

A piece of advice that I often share with women (aspiring) founders, but that obviously applies to every founder: do not listen to anyone, apart from you! With the right blend of ambition - financial, societal and personal - you'll embark on one of the most incredible journeys as a founder. So, let's go out there and seize the opportunity!

Tatiana Jama is the founder and Managing Partner at *SISTAFUND*.

Article by Tatiana Jama