

FROM IDEAS TO PILOT AND PRACTICE

Improving the Position of Women in the Labour Markets of the Danube Region



SOCIAL INNOVATIONS BOOKLET

Interreg Danube Region



Co-funded by the European Union

Social Innovation Booklet: Improving the Position of Women in the Labour Markets of the Danube Region

Author: Dr. Lachezar Afrikanov

Scientific Editor: Dr. Jani Kozina

Contributors: Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (Slovenia), Association of Business Women in Serbia (Serbia), Central Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency Nonprofit (Hungary), LAG Sokolovsko (Czech Republic), Ministry of Economy Affairs of Herceg-Bosnian County (Bosnia and Herzegovina), National Management School (Bulgaria), Association for Culture and Education PiNA (Slovenia), University of Graz (Austria), Registered association Styrian Iron Road (Austria), Employment Office of Herceg-Bosnian County (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Graphic Design: Iana Avramova

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FOREWORD

WIN was designed to improve the position of women in the labour markets of peripheral industrial regions in the Danube area. The project started from a simple observation: many barriers are not only economic. They are also cultural and institutional, shaped by local opportunity structures, stereotypes, work–life balance constraints, and the availability of supportive networks and services. Addressing these realities requires more than one-off activities. It requires a structured way to co-create solutions with stakeholders, test them under real conditions, and learn openly from what happens.

That is why WIN produced two complementary publications. The WIN Methodological Toolkit describes the pathway behind our work, how the partnership developed, tested, and reflected on social innovations in seven pilot regions. The current Social Innovation Booklet focuses on what that pathway produced. It presents the social innovation ideas developed in each region, highlights the innovations that were selected for piloting, and shows what was implemented and achieved in practice.

The results are grounded in both implementation experience and reflection. Across the project, 26 ideas were co-developed through the WIN Innovation Groups, and 13 were tested as pilot actions. Target groups shared feedback through a structured online questionnaire designed for learning and comparison across pilots, covering implemented social innovations. The questionnaire was delivered between October 2025 and January 2026. In parallel, stakeholders reflected through interviews and focus groups following a shared framework, reaching WIN Innovation Group members and external stakeholders across the partnership.

I am satisfied with what the WIN partnership achieved within real constraints. The pilots show that meaningful progress is possible when awareness is linked to concrete participation settings, when skills learning is practical and connected to next steps, and when community and networks are treated as a core mechanism

rather than an “additional benefit.” At the same time, the evaluation is clear about what should be strengthened next: more hands-on formats, more time for discussion and peer exchange, and clearer follow-up pathways that connect pilots to longer-term opportunities and institutional support.

This booklet is written for a wider public of practitioners and regional change-makers. If you work in municipalities, employment services, employer organisations, education and youth institutions, NGOs, or regional development bodies, you will find concrete examples, realistic lessons learned, and approaches that can be adapted to your own context. The toolkit explains how to build the process. This booklet shows what that process can produce.

Dr. Jani Kozina

Project coordinator, WIN Project





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WIN moved from co-creation to real-world testing in seven peripheral industrial regions across the Danube area. Local WIN Innovation Groups co-developed a portfolio of 26 social innovation ideas, and partners then selected 13 innovations for implementation, prioritising what was locally relevant and realistically testable within the project time-frame.

The implemented social innovations demonstrate several complementary pathways to change. Some pilots focused on shifting attitudes and stereotypes in male-dominated contexts by making women visible through schools, media, public symbols, and role-model stories. Others focused on strengthening women's employability and entrepreneurial readiness through practical learning formats that produce tangible outputs and clearer next steps. A third strand strengthened community and networks, creating trusted spaces where women can meet, learn, and support each other, often as a precondition for confidence and sustained action.

Participants valued supportive environments, practical learning, and connection to others. At the same time, they called for stronger practical elements, more time for discussion and networking, and clearer follow-up pathways such as mentoring, internships, or additional workshops that help translate learning into action. Stakeholders reinforced that pilots are a starting point rather than an endpoint, and stressed the importance of institutional anchoring and coordination across sectors so that pilot actions connect to longer-term labour market measures and programmes.

WIN followed a simple logic: understand local realities, co-create ideas with stakeholders, test what is feasible, and learn in a structured way.

In each pilot region, a WIN Innovation Group brought together local actors to define challenges affecting women's labour market participation and to generate a portfolio of social innovation ideas. From this pipeline, partners selected and implemented

pilot actions that could be realistically delivered within the project timeframe while remaining meaningful to local needs. The pilots were then reflected on through participant feedback and stakeholder perspectives, so that the project produces not only activities, but reusable learning.

The WIN Methodological Toolkit explains this pathway in practical detail. The current booklet complements the toolkit by focusing on what the pathway produced: the portfolio of ideas, the implemented social innovations, the outcomes and early impact signals, and the lessons that others can adapt. It documents the regional pathways from ideas to implemented pilots and translates cross-regional learning into transferable approaches and recommendations. It is written for practitioners and change-makers, municipalities and employment services, employers and chambers, education and youth institutions, NGOs, and regional development actors who want to drive change in their own regions.

WIN AT A GLANCE

7

pilot regions and 7 WIN Innovation Groups in 7 countries of the Danube Region.

26

social innovation ideas co-developed.

13

social innovations tested through implemented pilots.

Participant reflection: online questionnaire covering implemented social innovations (Oct 2025–Jan 2026), designed for learning, not statistical representation.

Stakeholder reflection: interviews and focus groups using a shared framework (Nov 2025–Feb 2026), reaching 33 WIN Innovation Group members and 15 external stakeholders.



The booklet was produced on the basis of several WIN deliverables, available on the [WIN project website](#):

- [Methodological toolkit for developing, testing and reflecting on social innovations \(D1.1.3\)](#)
- [Report on developed social innovation ideas \(D2.1.2\)](#)
- [Report on implemented social innovations \(D2.2.2\)](#)
- [Evaluation report based on participant online questionnaire \(D2.3.3/1\)](#)
- [Evaluation report based on stakeholder interviews and focus groups \(D2.3.3/2\)](#)

PART I.

REGIONAL STORIES



AUSTRIA – STYRIAN IRON ROAD REGION

Making women visible in a male-dominated industrial context

In the Styrian Iron Road region, partners and local stakeholders described women's labour market position as strongly shaped by workplace culture and persistent social expectations in a historically male-dominated industrial environment. Instead of starting with "classical" labour market interventions, the regional approach focused on cultural barriers, stereotypes, and the visibility of women's perspectives, combined with accessible formats that could reach both women and the wider public.

The regional pathway therefore prioritised three mutually reinforcing moves: public awareness with a strong local symbol, visible role models with real stories, and a stable network where women can meet, support each other, and keep the topic alive beyond one-off events.

Ideas developed

The WIN Innovation Group in Austria developed three ideas.

1. The creativity contest "Women conquer industry and mining" was designed as a school-based awareness action to challenge traditional gender roles and make STEM and industrial careers feel thinkable and "normal" for girls and boys. A key element was turning the winning message into a public, everyday symbol through a bus touring the region for a year.
2. Female mentoring, with the establishment of female role models, extended the contest logic into sustained visibility. The idea combined role model school visits with a media campaign that regularly presents real women working in industry and mining, so that "women in technical jobs" become a repeated narrative, not a rare exception.

3. Stronger networks – stronger women focused on continuity. It aimed to strengthen women’s networking in the region by building on the existing “Iron Women” network and creating a new “Work and Industry” department focused specifically on women’s realities in peripheral industrial regions. Everyday reminder that women belong in these sectors.

Implemented social innovations

All three ideas were implemented in the Styrian Iron Road region as one connected package: a contest for young people, a role model and media visibility strand, and a longer-term networking structure. This approach was chosen because the region identified cultural barriers and stereotypes as a main factor influencing women’s opportunities in industrial areas.

Pilot 1. Creativity contest “Women conquer industry and mining”

The creativity contest invited pupils to depict their vision of women’s future in industry and mining through drawings or designs, supported through school presentations and a public voting element. The winning design was then displayed [on a public bus](#) touring the region for one year, creating a visible, everyday reminder that women belong in these sectors.

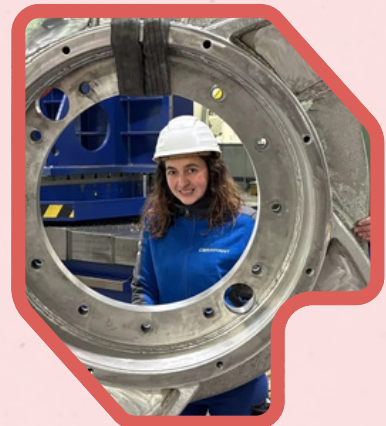


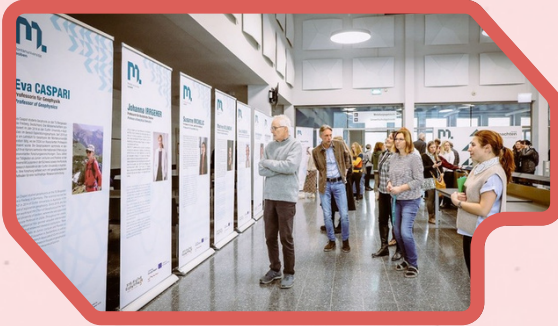
Implementation reached approximately 500 pupils through presentations in six schools, supported by public relations and online voting. The final presentation took place at an iconic site, the iron mine, strengthening the local identity connection of the message.

Pilot 2. Female mentoring – establishment of female role models

The pilot mobilised female role models through school visits and a sustained regional media campaign. In summer–autumn 2025, a campaign featured eleven women from mining, industry, and science, publishing weekly stories and amplifying them via coordinated social media activity. 500 high school pupils were actively in contact with role models at their schools; the magazine in which the media campaign was published reached all households in the region.

Aiming to deepen the narrative and connect it to institutional history, the pilot also created an exhibition with Montanuniversität Leoben, [“100 years of Women in Mining and Metallurgy – from the pioneers to the present day,”](#) presenting more than 30 roll-ups featuring pioneering women and current academic and professional leaders. The exhibition had more than 500 visitors in the first two days after the opening and will be extended and shown also regularly in the forthcoming years.





Pilot 3. Stronger networks – stronger women

The third pilot was implemented through the existing “Iron Women” network by establishing a new “Work and Industry” department, focused on the needs and challenges of female employees in peripheral industrial regions. Activities included workshops, lectures, coaching, and networking events connected to career planning, financial security, and other professional topics.

Around 20 women participated in network activities such as the “Ladies of Leoben” guided tour and get-together on World Women’s Day 2025. A pub quiz was prepared as a playful low-threshold format (around 40 expected attendees). The pilot also developed a cultural storytelling strand: a play titled [“Die Einzige im Raum”](#) (“The Only One in the Room”), based on interviews with ten women aged 26–63 working in strongly male-dominated environments, designed to translate lived experience into a form accessible to the wider public.



Evaluation highlights

Participant feedback across the Austrian pilots indicates strong appreciation of supportive environments, interesting content, discussion opportunities, and the chance to build social ties and networks. For the creativity contest, respondents reported high satisfaction and strong willingness to participate again (90% “yes”), while suggesting more networking opportunities and stronger promotion and visibility.

For the role model campaign, motivations were strongly change-oriented: participants wanted to make a difference, encourage girls and young women toward technical education and careers, and reduce stereotypes. They appreciated the open, participatory format, while suggesting clearer targeting (age group fit) and increased visibility on social media.

For “Stronger networks – stronger women,” respondents valued discussion and content, as well as organisation and accessibility, and suggested more practical examples, more time for discussion, more frequent events, and stronger promotion. Stakeholder reflections reinforced the strategic choice of Austria’s approach: in industrial regions, shifting social norms and stereotypes is not “soft work,” but a necessary condition for long-term labour market change.

Lessons learned

- In peripheral industrial regions, cultural barriers and stereotypes can be a primary constraint and a realistic entry point for action.
- Visibility works best when it becomes part of everyday life, not a one-day message. A bus touring the region for a year is a strong example of “everyday normalisation”.
- Role models are most effective when stories are repeated over time and appear through multiple channels (schools, media, exhibitions).
- Networks create continuity. Embedding work inside an existing trusted structure increases sustainability and makes repeated low-threshold formats easier to deliver.



- Participants consistently asked for stronger promotion and more opportunities to connect; this is part of the intervention design, not a marketing detail.
- Cultural formats (guided walks, quizzes, theatre based on interviews) can make women's realities visible and engage audiences who rarely join employment-related events.

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BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA – HERCEG-BOSNIAN COUNTY / CANTON 10

From “I don’t know where to start” to practical readiness for work and entrepreneurship


In the Herceg-Bosnian County, partners and local stakeholders described a typical barrier pattern for women’s labour market participation: interest and potential exist, but the path to formal employment or entrepreneurship feels complex, risky, and difficult to navigate alone. Stakeholders pointed to administrative complexity, fear of formalisation and inspections, high social contributions, and limited access to childcare as issues that can discourage women from taking the next step, even when they have concrete ideas and motivation.

The WIN work in the region therefore prioritised an approach that is both confidence-building and practical. Instead of starting with abstract awareness messages, the regional pathway focused on equipping women with usable business literacy, helping them understand support mechanisms and options, and creating a setting where women can build peer connections and feel less alone while exploring employment or entrepreneurship.

Ideas developed

The WIN Innovation Group developed three ideas that together outline a pipeline, from foundational skills to market entry support and longer-term ecosystem building.

1. “Step out of the shadow – Don’t tap in the dark” proposed a free business literacy training for unemployed women, combined with information on incentives and public calls, and with the possibility of mentoring through



“Entrepreneur’s shadow”, plus job-fair workshops and a programme evaluation workshop.

2. “Step out of the shadow – Take your place on the market” focused on supporting market entry for women by assisting the establishment of craft enterprises and launching entrepreneurial ideas, through a public call, info days across municipalities, and mentoring and round tables with experts in entrepreneurship, accounting, legal support, and financing.
3. “Support for social enterprises” aimed to introduce and strengthen social entrepreneurship in the county, combining awareness formats, a public call, and open-day visibility, supported by measures to make social enterprise employment models more feasible.

Implemented social innovations

From the three ideas, partners selected the business literacy training for piloting. The logic was straightforward: it addressed an urgent, widely shared need, it was feasible within the project timeframe, and it could be embedded in existing institutional capacity through cooperation with local employment and adult education stakeholders. In parallel, stakeholders worked on outlining support measures aimed at encouraging women’s entrepreneurial activity and labour market participation, positioning the training as a practical foundation for longer-term system action.

Pilot 1. “Step out of the shadow – Don’t tap in the dark”: Business literacy training for unemployed women

The pilot was delivered as a free, accredited 25-hour modular business literacy training programme in cooperation with Narodno sveučilište Livno in November and December 2025. The content covered highly practical topics such as cost management, budgeting, payroll, tax, accounting, communication, and business planning. Demand was strong: applications filled within two days of the public announcement, confirming both the need and the attractiveness of the format.

The training was complemented by the [employment fair “Step Out of the Shadow”](#), which also offered two empowerment workshops: “Freelance 101 – From zero to the first job” and “Power of potential – From talent to opportunity.” A focus group in December 2025 gathered partners, stakeholders, and participants to evaluate the programme and discuss recommendations for improvement and continuation.

In terms of concrete achievements, the pilot exceeded its planned reach: 21 women enrolled instead of the planned 15. Seventeen women completed all modules, developed their own business plans, and received certificates. The pilot also created a practical learning infrastructure: tailored learning materials and a Google Classroom space for access, guidance, and feedback. Feedback pointed to strong appreciation of the modules and of the mentors’ expertise and approachability.



Evaluation highlights

The participant questionnaire describes a clearly defined target group: all respondents were women aged 30–64; most had vocational or secondary education; and the majority were unemployed. Social media and media advertisements were the most common channels through which women learned about the training. Motivations clustered around learning and future opportunity, including gaining new knowledge, exploring work opportunities, and finding inspiration for next steps.

Participants valued a friendly and supportive atmosphere, good organisation and accessibility, and opportunities for discussion and business networking. Stakeholder reflections reinforced the participant perspective and emphasised confidence-building effects, especially for women re-entering the labour market after long unemployment, time abroad, or caregiving responsibilities. Stakeholders also highlighted that structural barriers remain real (administrative complexity, childcare), and that the next step should strengthen follow-up through mentoring and additional practical workshops, including digital literacy.

Lessons learned

- A low-threshold, practical training offer can unlock demand quickly when it addresses real “how to start” barriers.
- Clear outputs matter. Business plans and valid certificates helped participants feel ready for the next step, not only informed.
-
- Continuity is the missing layer. Feedback pointed strongly toward sustained mentoring and additional practical workshops, especially in business and digital literacy.
- Institutional embedding increases sustainability potential. The training was positioned as feasible to continue within regular institutional activities.
- Access barriers should be anticipated. Limited digital skills and lack of computer access were reported as constraints for part of the group.

BULGARIA – RADOMIR REGION

From creative skills to visibility and community

Many women in the Radomir region carry significant family and care responsibilities. Even when women join education or training, opportunities for employment and work diversification can remain limited.

As a result, many women in the region orient themselves toward creative and craft-based activities such as ceramics, jewellery, handmade notebooks, clothing, or home-produced food. Skills and creativity are often strong, but visibility and access to markets were identified as major challenges.

Ideas developed

The WIN Innovation Group developed three ideas designed as a connected pathway:

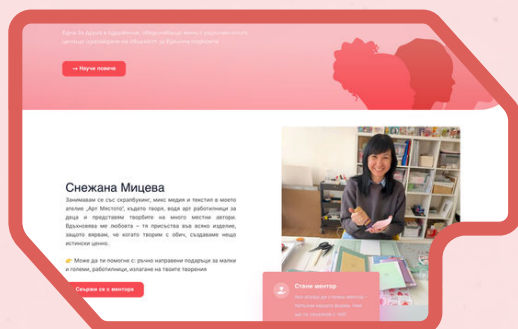
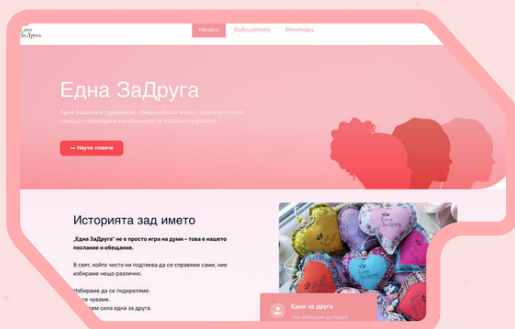
1. [EdnaZaDruga.com](https://ednazadruga.com) (All for one and one for all platform), an online platform for women entrepreneurs and artists, was envisioned as a digital hub combining an e-shop, success stories, an event calendar, mentorship opportunities, and entrepreneurship resources, with the aim of strengthening visibility and collaboration.
2. Creative and supportive physical spaces for women proposed regular meetings, workshops, festivals, and community visits in Radomir and nearby villages, combining creative expression with skill-building and support.
3. Edna Za Druga, a women's association for support, empowerment, and advocacy, was designed as a formal structure that could sustain community-driven initiatives, build partnerships, and strengthen women's voice over time.

Implemented social innovations

From the three ideas developed in Radomir, partners implemented two that could be tested within the project timeframe and that reinforce each other: one builds visibility and connection through a digital community space, the other builds continuity and trust through a dedicated physical space and a functioning local network. The association idea remains a logical next step for sustainability once the network has matured.

Pilot 1. EdnaZaDruga.bg, online platform for women entrepreneurs and artists

The [Edna ZaDruga online platform](#) was created as a practical digital space where women can find information, share experiences, gain visibility, and connect with each other. From the beginning, the intention was to build a community rather than simply a website, with a longer-term vision for women to present and offer handmade products, crafts, foods, and services.



Implementation combined platform building and continuous maintenance with locally-driven content development, including collecting and presenting stories from women in the region and involving local contributors and mentors. The platform launched with structured sections (Homepage, Library, Mentors, and a future Shop area) and was supported by an active Facebook page to strengthen communication and visibility.

By the end of the pilot, the project reported concrete visibility and community signals: 700+ followers on the linked [Facebook page](#), more than 140 published posts, more than 10 personal stories made publicly visible, and a network of local mentors accessible through the platform.

Pilot 2. Women's Community Network Edna ZaDruga

The Women's Community Network was implemented as a local community initiative bringing women together in a dedicated physical space in Radomir, offering practical workshops, mentoring, and mutual support to strengthen skills, confidence, and social inclusion.

A dedicated community space was established in the city centre and became the main location for workshops, events, and meetings. The programme remained locally-driven, with topics shaped by participants' expressed interests and needs.

The pilot reported a functioning women's network with continuity and pace: twenty-two workshops and many meetings were organised, supported by a local mentor network and a stable environment for regular interaction and mutual encouragement. The completed workshops included craft workshops (8), book club meetings (4), art therapy workshops (3), jewellery workshops (2), beauty and self-care workshops (2), and digital tools workshops (2).



Evaluation highlights

Participant feedback shows that women most often learned about the initiative through friends, colleagues, or other personal contacts, followed by social media. Motivations were varied, but two stood out: the desire to learn something new and to meet new people. Respondents valued the friendly and supportive atmosphere, opportunities for discussion, good organisation and accessibility, and interesting content, while describing the main benefit as gaining new knowledge and skills.



Stakeholder reflections add two strong messages. First, digital visibility is central for sustaining women's creative activities and expanding opportunities, and practical digital skills workshops were highlighted as a priority for continuation, using the space and tools created through WIN (including the platform and Facebook page). Second, stakeholders described the greatest value of the pilots as trust, community, and self-driven collaboration, which creates a foundation for longer-

term change, even beyond the pilot timeframe. They also pointed to persistent barriers such as stereotypes and difficult relationships with municipal structures, while discussing practical strategies for improving communication with local authorities by framing results in terms of regional development value.

Lessons learned

- In Radomir, many women already have skills. The bottleneck is visibility, confidence, and pathways to market access.
- A digital platform becomes meaningful when it functions as a community space, with local voices, stories, and mentor presence, not only as a technical product.
- A dedicated physical space supports continuity and trust. The network's stability came from repeatable meetings, practical workshops, and a welcoming setting.
- Practical workshop formats matter. The programme mix that worked included craft skills, art-based formats, and digital tools workshops, not a single training model.
- Sustainability signals can be social and behavioural: peer networks, return participation, and self-driven collaboration are early indicators of long-term potential.
- Institutional relationships shape momentum. Where municipal cooperation is difficult, local actors emphasised the need to frame results in terms of regional development value and to keep building constructive channels.



CZECH REPUBLIC – KARLOVY VARY REGION

Building women's entrepreneurship, and shaping gender-equal choices early


In the Karlovy Vary Region, the WIN Innovation Group worked with two interconnected realities that shape women's opportunities in everyday life. Women who are already entrepreneurs, or are considering entrepreneurship, often need a safe space, credibility, and peer support to grow confidence, exchange practical experience, and turn ideas into action. At the same time, gender stereotypes begin shaping educational and career choices early, when young people are making key decisions about secondary education and future pathways.

This led to a regional approach that deliberately combined two levels of change: a community-based ecosystem for women in business, and a structured, format to help pupils reflect on labour market realities and gender equality at the point when choices are being formed. Addressing both groups at the same time makes it possible to influence not only current opportunities, but also future choices.

Ideas developed

The WIN Innovation Group proposed five social innovations in total. Two focused directly on women, especially entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial skills. Three targeted young people, to support informed career choices and reduce gender stereotypes. Together, these ideas create a pathway from early awareness to practical support for women already active or entering the labour market.

1. BusinessWomen without Borders: a legally anchored association and bottom-up network for women entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs, combining education, mentoring, networking, and visibility of women's entrepreneurial stories.

- 
2. Project day at school for gender equality: a structured one-day school format using career tools, talent assessment, and real stories to help pupils reflect on stereotypes and make more informed choices.
 3. Motivational workshops to promote gender equality: an 18-hour workshop series for high school students, combining practical employability skills and labour market awareness.
 4. Discussions with school graduates: sessions with former pupils as near-peer role models, helping students understand education pathways and challenge gendered assumptions about professions.
 5. Training programme for aspiring entrepreneurs: a comprehensive learning and practice programme for women who want to start or grow a business, combining skills development, inspiration, and support.

Implemented social innovations

From the five proposed ideas, two were selected for piloting. The selection followed a feasibility and relevance logic: one innovation could create an enduring support structure for women in business, while the other could be tested as a simple, replicable model inside a real school setting, with potential for scaling through existing regional cooperation.

Pilot 1. BusinessWomen without Borders

[BusinessWomen without Borders](#) was implemented as a legally established association and community space for women entrepreneurs and women considering entrepreneurship. The pilot's core design was intentionally bottom-up: regular meetings created a safe environment for sharing real business challenges, building trust, and developing cooperation among participants.

Implementation combined networking and peer exchange, mentoring for start-up

entrepreneurs, and visibility through marketing activities and an online catalogue. The pilot generated scale signals rather than only event delivery: around 20 blended educational and networking meetings were delivered, the community grew from an expected ~20 members to ~50 active members, and approximately 150 women engaged overall through online and in-person participation.

Beyond participation, the pilot reports concrete market and cooperation outcomes, including new collaborations and examples of members securing regular customers and partnerships with gastronomy stakeholders.



Pilot 2. Project day at school for gender equality

This pilot tested whether one well-designed, four-hour school-based intervention can create meaningful reflection about labour market realities and gender stereotypes at a time when pupils face important educational choices. [The project day](#) was designed for pupils in 7th–9th grades and worked with career tools, reflection on individual strengths, and practical examples presented without gender-based categorisation.

The implemented format included working with a web-based career application, linked to basic financial literacy and delivered with involvement from the Regional Chamber of Commerce. The pilot reports 27 pupils participating from two classes (8th and 9th grade). Pupils valued interactivity, small-group work and open Q&A, and the activity is described as easy to transfer due to its simple structure and use of existing tools. By creating space for reflection and discussion, the activity helped pupils see career choices as more open, flexible, and less constrained by traditional gender expectations.



Evaluation highlights

Participant feedback for BusinessWomen without Borders shows strong interest in meeting people, gaining new knowledge, and finding inspiration. Respondents valued business networking opportunities, content, and a friendly and supportive atmosphere, and reported gains in social ties and support, knowledge and skills, and identifying new opportunities. Almost all respondents said they would like to attend similar events again, and the evaluation notes tangible outcomes such as women launching businesses and new collaborations emerging within the network.

For the school project day, pupils highlighted interesting content, good organisation, learning something new, and discussion opportunities. Overall satisfaction was high and most pupils would like to attend similar events again. Stakeholder reflections emphasised continuity and systematic measures alongside pilots, including flexible forms of employment, stronger childcare availability, and education and retraining opportunities for women in technical fields, digitalisation, and leadership skills.

Overall, the evaluation confirms that combining practical support with a strong sense of community and early awareness-raising creates a meaningful and locally relevant approach to improving women's position in the labour market.

Lessons learned

- Combining two levels of action-support for women entrepreneurs and early career-orientation work in schools creates a more complete regional change logic than either stand alone.
- In community-based entrepreneurship support, belonging and trust are the conditions that allow practical learning, mentoring, and cooperation to happen.
- Scaling a network requires organisational design: predictable communication and clear role division protect continuity as the community grows.
- A short, well-structured school project day can spark reflection, but longer-term impact needs follow-up activities embedded in school rhythms.
- Long-term progress depends on continuity and system measures (flexible work, childcare, retraining pathways) alongside pilots.

HUNGARY – KOMÁROM- ESZTERGOM COUNTY

Changing what is “normal” in a male-dominated industrial context

In the Hungarian pilot region, partners and stakeholders described women’s labour market position as strongly influenced by workplace culture and everyday social norms. In such settings, skills development alone is not always the fastest lever. Attitudes, stereotypes, and “taken-for-granted” expectations can quietly shape who is encouraged, who is promoted, and whose work is recognised.

The regional pathway therefore chose an unusual but strategic entry point: reaching men directly, in an accessible format, and inviting reflection without blame. The ambition was not to “win an argument,” but to make space for dialogue that can gradually change everyday behaviours at home and at work.

Ideas developed

The WIN Innovation Group in Hungary developed five ideas, covering both cultural change and practical labour market conditions.

1. Attitude-shaping podcast series for men: an accessible podcast format addressing gender stereotypes directly and encouraging reflection on how attitudes shape women’s opportunities.
2. Showcasing good practices for employers: collecting and sharing examples of female-friendly workplace approaches to encourage employers to adopt supportive practices.
3. Financial education for women: practical learning to strengthen women’s financial literacy and decision-making.

4. Awareness-raising events: public activities and dialogues to increase visibility of gender equality topics and encourage community discussion.
5. Best workplace for women award: a recognition scheme to motivate employers and highlight workplaces that create good conditions for women.

Implemented social innovations

Eventually, a decision was taken to implement the podcast concept (NEMIGEN) as the pilot action. The selection logic was pragmatic and strategic: the format can reach beyond “already convinced” circles, it can engage men as a key group shaping workplace culture, and it can combine wide outreach with low-threshold, repeatable learning.

Pilot 1. NEMIGEN – Podcast series on gender stereotypes



NEMIGEN is an [eight-episode podcast series](#) designed to challenge persistent gender stereotypes about women, with a deliberate focus on how men’s attitudes

influence women's position in the labour market and society more broadly. The series uses a playful, accessible format that mixes humour, real-life experiences, expert insights from sociologists and psychologists, and conversations with both public figures and "ordinary people." Each episode is built around a provocative yes/no-style question that mirrors common stereotypes and invites listeners to rethink everyday assumptions.

The pilot combined professional production with thoughtful delivery design. Hosts were selected for credibility and public recognition, and the series was distributed on major platforms, supported by ongoing promotion through social media and partner networks. One distinctive element was the integration of AI-generated responses as an additional "voice" in the discussion, used to trigger reflection and critical thinking rather than to provide answers.



In terms of reach and engagement, the pilot reports strong national visibility. Eight episodes were produced and published, and the series reached more than 200,000 listeners and viewers across Hungary.

Evaluation highlights

The online survey around NEMIGEN reached a mixed audience in age and gender, with respondents almost evenly split between women and men. Social media was the most common channel through which people learned about the podcast, followed by personal contacts and associations/NGOs.

The reported effects align with the pilot's intention. After listening, many respondents said the podcast made them reflect on their attitudes, and a majority indicated they would definitely behave differently in work or private life, with others saying they might. Respondents highlighted increased awareness of women's work-life balance and a better understanding of women's position in the labour market among the most valuable takeaways. Stakeholder interviews added that the podcast was complemented by live awareness-raising events and audience meetings to create spaces for dialogue beyond the online format.

Lessons learned

- In industrial regions, cultural norms and everyday language are part of the labour market “infrastructure” shaping women's opportunities.
- Popular and entertaining formats can reduce resistance and open a door to sensitive topics that are otherwise hard to discuss in public.
- Credible hosts and authentic stories help bring in audiences, especially men, who might not normally engage with gender equality content.
- Combining expert insight with lived experience strengthens trust and keeps the discussion both engaging and grounded.

For longer-term impact, broad reach needs to be paired with institutional uptake, for example using episodes in HR trainings, workplace diversity programmes, education, or employment services.

SERBIA – LOZNICA REGION

Women's Ethno Hub: combining tradition, digital skills, and new economic pathways

In Loznica many women contribute to household income through crafts, homemade products, rural tourism, and small-scale production, often in rural and peripheral areas. Yet their work can remain invisible in the market, while younger women may face limited local opportunities and a lack of practical upskilling pathways.

The Serbian regional approach responded with a coherent idea: treat women's labour market inclusion as an ecosystem challenge rather than a single intervention. Under the umbrella of the Women's Ethno Hub initiative, the pilot region intentionally tested three complementary social innovations between September and December 2025, linking digitalisation, market access, sustainability, and social entrepreneurship.

Ideas developed

The WIN Innovation Group in Serbia developed three ideas under the Women's Ethno Hub concept.

1. Intergenerational synergy through digital education and better access to the market proposed connecting older women producers with younger women trained in digital marketing and AI tools, so that traditional products and services can become visible and competitive beyond the local market.
2. Circular economy training and capacity building proposed introducing circular economy and zero-waste approaches as an economic opportunity for women managing rural tourism and farms, combining expert learning with visits to proven local models.
3. Establishment of social enterprise(s) supporting women to understand social entrepreneurship and, where possible, move toward formalisation, using new legal opportunities and potential subsidies as enabling factors.

Implemented social innovations

All three ideas were implemented and tested in Serbia as an intentionally connected set. Instead of piloting one standalone action, partners tested a small system of interventions that reinforce each other: digital skills and visibility, sustainability learning, and a realistic first entry into social entrepreneurship.

Pilot 1. Intergenerational synergy through digital education and better access to the market

This pilot connected older women producing authentic traditional products and services with younger women interested in gaining employable digital skills, and used joint work to turn learning into market-facing outcomes.



A [two-day training on digital marketing and AI tools](#) was delivered in Loznica on 22–23 September 2025, with nearly 40 women participating. A full-day practical training

and photo session followed on 7 November 2025 at the ethno household Šurička Bajka, where participants photographed products and prepared texts later refined with AI tools. Two online mentoring sessions supported the preparation of promotional content and catalogue pages.

Intergenerational cooperation was established between 22 women producers and 9 younger women assistants, leading to a completed digital gift catalogue, “With Love from Loznica,” presenting women’s products and services and enabling visibility beyond the immediate local context. Partners also reported extensive outreach, including around 70 media and social media publications and national and local TV coverage.

Pilot 2. Circular economy training and capacity building for rural tourism households and farms

This pilot was implemented as a one-day study visit and training on 17 October 2025 at a household recognised as a working example of zero-waste rural tourism. Around ten women participated and gained first-hand exposure to how sustainability practices can be translated into concrete rural tourism and production activities.



Pilot 3. Establishment of social enterprise(s)

A full-day [training on social entrepreneurship](#) and business model development was delivered on 30 September 2025. Participants worked with the Canvas business model as a practical tool and explored mission definition, governance models, legal frameworks, and funding opportunities. While formal establishment remains a longer pathway, the pilot opened local discussion and increased visibility of social entrepreneurship through media coverage.

Evaluation highlights

The online questionnaire evaluation in Serbia covered the intergenerational digital education pilot. Respondents learned about the activity through personal contacts, social media, NGOs, or educational counsellors. The dominant motivations were learning something new and exploring work opportunities.

Participants reported strong perceived gains in knowledge and skills and high willingness to attend similar events in the future, while suggesting more practical examples, more time for discussion, and more frequent events. Stakeholder reflections confirmed that the three pilots functioned as a coherent package and described increased confidence and reduced fear of using digital tools. Stakeholders also highlighted that sustainability and scaling will require stronger systemic support, including continuous digital education, market placement support, and long-term mentoring.

Lessons learned

- Participation depends on flexible scheduling and realistic planning, especially for women travelling from rural areas.
- Mixed-level groups can become a strength; differences in digital skills supported peer learning and intergenerational cooperation.

- New topics need repeated exposure. Circular economy and social entrepreneurship attracted smaller groups at first, showing that awareness is a prerequisite for broader engagement.
- Experiential, hands-on learning increased relevance and uptake, helping participants judge what is realistically applicable in their own households and businesses.
- Turning learning into a concrete output strengthens momentum. The digital catalogue created a visible product of cooperation and a practical tool for market access.
- Scaling depends on institutional anchoring and systemic support, not only project-based activities.

SLOVENIA – TRBOVLJE

Making career choices feel real, and local opportunities visible

In Trbovlje, stakeholders described a familiar regional pattern: young people often do not have a clear overview of professions, educational pathways, and what different jobs actually look like, while at the same time being exposed to many “information events” that no longer capture attention. Traditional career fairs can also reproduce a limited range of employers and job profiles, which may reinforce the feeling of low prospects in the region.

The WIN work in Trbovlje responded by focusing on a practical question: how to make career exploration engaging, experiential, and connected to real employers, with specific attention to encouraging girls to explore diverse career paths.

Ideas developed

The WIN Innovation Group developed four ideas that address the labour market challenge from complementary angles.

1. Razpisne mojstrice / Grant Masters focuses on strengthening women's capacity to prepare high-quality municipal grant applications, responding to the local issue of low-quality and incomplete applications and the administrative burden this creates.
2. Click for a job / Klik za šiht proposes a digital platform with professional profiles and career information designed to connect pupils, students, and employers, and to make local opportunities more visible.
3. Innovation environment for women entrepreneurs aims to strengthen women's entrepreneurship by creating a more coherent support ecosystem, including tailored content, peer networking, and practical support formats.
4. Job Happens / Šiht Happens: Career Exploration Day was designed as an interactive career exploration event, linked to an existing career fair, using

hands-on, youth-friendly methods to connect young people with employers and real career stories.

Implemented social innovations

The Slovenian partners selected Job Happens (Šiht Happens) for piloting. The choice reflects a clear feasibility and impact logic: it could be delivered through strong local cooperation and would directly address the gap between “information about careers” and “experienced understanding of careers,” especially for young people.

Pilot 1. Job Happens (Šiht Happens) – Career Exploration Day

Job Happens transformed a traditional [career fair](#) into an interactive experience. It took place on 15 October 2025 at Delavski dom / Workers' Home Trbovlje and brought together more than 400 primary and secondary school pupils and students, as well as 33 regional employers.





The event design replaced static booths with a set of structured experiences: a career escape room, a living library format (small-group conversations with professionals), interactive workshops (including AI and work, international mobility via EURES, and “know your rights”), and a scavenger-hunt style employer showcase that turned employer contact into an active mission rather than passive browsing.

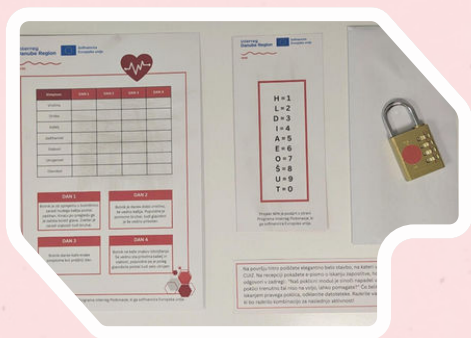
A key deliverable was the development of methodological guidelines for organising interactive career-orientation events, intended to support repeat delivery and scaling through the Employment Service network. The pilot was also reported as being integrated into regular programming of key institutions, strengthening partnerships with schools and local career services.

Evaluation highlights

The participant questionnaire sample for Job Happens included 29 usable units. Most respondents were up to 15 years old, and women represented a clear majority of respondents. Most learned about the event at school, which confirms the importance of school embedding for youth-oriented innovations.

Respondents most often liked the event because of its interesting content. They also highlighted good organisation, new knowledge, opportunities for discussion,

and a friendly atmosphere. Suggestions for improvement focused on allowing more time for discussion and practical examples and offering more information on education and job opportunities. Stakeholder reflections stressed that young people need to be excited to engage and that interactive activities and direct employer contact reduce reservations and fear around approaching employers.



Lessons learned

- Interactive career orientation can refresh existing formats by shifting from information delivery to experience-based exploration (escape room, living library, challenges).
- School embedding matters. When schools actively channel participation, the event becomes part of a real guidance pathway, not an optional extra.
- Participants clearly asked for more time for conversation and more practical examples, suggesting the interactive logic should be extended rather than reduced.
- Scaling requires operational simplicity. Delivery lessons pointed to the need for a single operational lead, clearer rotation structures, and active reinforcement of teacher guidance on site.
- Methodological guidelines are a practical scaling tool that makes repetition through institutional networks realistic.

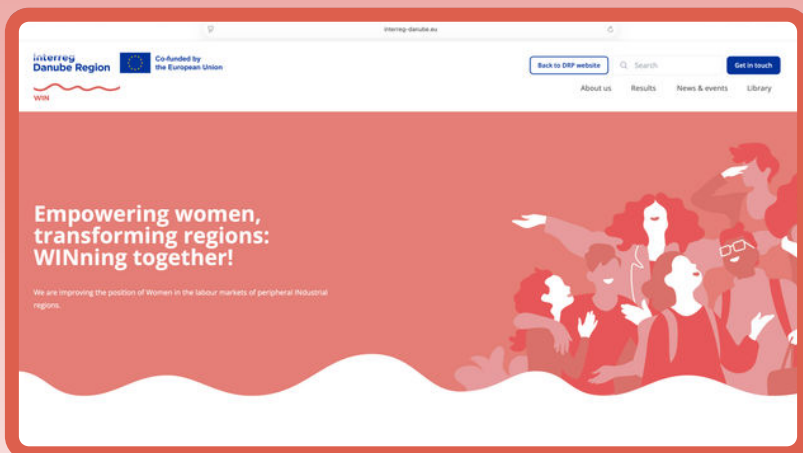
PART II.

CROSS-REGIONAL LEARNINGS



SPREADING THE WIN SPIRIT

WIN was built through local work in seven pilot regions, but its relevance depended on whether that work could travel beyond the people directly involved. Communication therefore did more than report activities. It helped turn local experiences into shared stories, made women's realities in peripheral industrial regions more visible, and created multiple entry points for stakeholders, communities, and wider public to engage with the project. Communication was not a final dissemination layer added after implementation. It was part of how the project generated broader value. It connected pilots to wider audiences, supported the visibility of women's experiences and local innovations, and helped transform project activities into content that could be understood, shared, and reused in other contexts.



Throughout the project, communication developed as an interconnected ecosystem rather than a set of isolated channels. The [project website](#) functioned as the main public home of WIN, bringing together project updates, partner meetings, workshop outcomes, innovation group activities, and key outputs such as studies, guidelines, and other results.

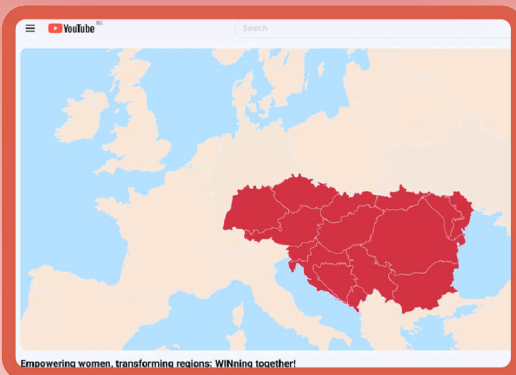
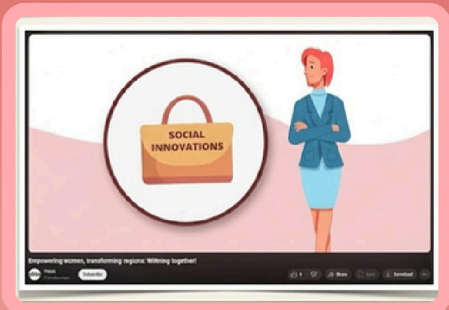
Social media extended this visibility in a more dynamic and immediate way. Instead of creating separate project channels from scratch, WIN relied on the established platforms of partner organisations. This was a practical and strategic choice. It allowed the project to build on existing trust and audiences, reach communities already connected to local actors, and avoid fragmentation of communication efforts. Across the project, social media was used not only to announce activities, but also to share stories, highlight role models, promote opportunities, and keep regional audiences connected to the broader journey of WIN.



Newsletters added another layer of continuity. While social media creates regular visibility, newsletters provide rhythm and structure. They made it possible to gather key developments, results, and upcoming opportunities into a format that was easier to follow over time. This was particularly important in a multi-country project with diverse activities, where

communication needed not only to attract attention, but also to help audiences understand the project as a coherent whole. In this way, newsletters supported a more stable relationship with stakeholders who wanted to stay informed without following day-to-day communication.

Media and public relations work helped the project move beyond its immediate network. Articles, interviews, and coverage in online media, print, and television brought WIN into wider public discussion across different regional settings. Media visibility proved especially valuable when it was linked to local events, campaigns, or public activities, because regional media are often most responsive when a project becomes visible on the ground. This created a reinforcing effect: events generated stories, and media helped those stories travel further.



The same logic shaped the [project video](#) and the awareness-raising campaign. The video presented both the realities women face in peripheral industrial regions and the project activities developed in response, including pilot actions, emerging networks, and practical tools. By combining personal experience with project insight, it helped audiences quickly understand why the topic matters and what the project was trying to change. The awareness-raising campaign strengthened this further by combining digital and offline communication into a more recognisable and focused narrative. A particularly important element was the collection and sharing of women's personal stories. These stories made the topic more human and more relatable, while also challenging stereotypes through concrete experience rather than abstract messages.



WIN also gained strategic recognition at macro-regional level. During the project, it was officially designated as a [Danube Strategy Flagship](#) under Priority Area 9, 'People & Skills', of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). This recognition confirms the project's strong contribution to more accessible, inclusive, and effective labour markets across the Danube Region, and positions WIN among the initiatives seen as models of good practice in the macro-region. Through its pilot actions, support for women's skills development and networking, and efforts to address institutional barriers, WIN has demonstrated how cross-border cooperation can generate tangible change for people and communities, in line with the objectives of Priority Area 9.

Events and workshops remained among the strongest communication spaces in the project. They created direct opportunities for dialogue, trust-building, and exchange, but they also generated much of the content that later travelled through websites, social media, newsletters, and media coverage. Seen in this way, communication was not separate from participation. It grew out of it. The most credible communication moments were those rooted in real interaction, real places, and real voices.

Across channels, WIN achieved both scale and continuity. Over the course of the project, more than 365 posts were published across 19 social platforms, reaching more than 285,000 people. The partnership produced 4 newsletters, built a subscriber base of more than 100, secured 85 media publications across online media, print, and television, and carried out more than 150 communication activities. These efforts were closely connected to more than 35 events across the 7 pilot regions.

WIN COMMUNICATION AT A GLANCE

365+

posts across 19 social platforms

285,000+

people reached

4

newsletters

100+

subscribers

85

media publications

150+

communication activities

35+

events across 7 pilot regions

What matters most, however, is not only the number of outputs. It is the kind of visibility they created. Communication helped connect regional pilots to a wider transnational story about women's position in the labour market of peripheral industrial regions. It made project activities and results easier to access and easier to understand. It also helped local innovations, women's experiences, and regional voices enter wider conversations where they might otherwise remain invisible.

VOICES OF PARTICIPANTS

Across the WIN pilot regions, we wanted to understand one simple thing: when these social innovations met real people in real places, what actually landed, what felt useful, and what was missing. Participants in WIN activities were invited to complete a short online questionnaire, shared as a link or QR code in local languages. The evaluation was designed for learning and reflection, not for statistical representativeness. It covered implemented social innovations within the piloting period. To enable comparison across very different local activities, partners used a shared questionnaire structure, with only limited adjustments where a pilot's format required it.

The participants involved in the pilot actions represent diverse target groups across the seven pilot regions, reflecting the different approaches to women's empowerment implemented within the WIN project. They primarily included:

- women of working age, including unemployed, inactive, or those seeking career change or re-entry into the labour market;
- young women and girls, particularly pupils and students exposed to career orientation and awareness-raising activities;
- women interested in entrepreneurship, self-employment, or creative industries;
- participants engaged in skills development, training, and capacity-building activities;
- members of local communities involved in networking, mentoring, and support initiatives.

What came back from participants was remarkably consistent across different pilots. People tended to describe the activities in which they participated as *useful, accessible, and well organised*. The strongest value highlighted was the experience of being in a *supportive environment, learning something practical, and meeting others who face similar issues*. In different words, again and again, participants highlighted: good atmosphere, interesting content, discussion, and the chance to exchange experience and build networks.

At the same time, the feedback points to a recurring gap between inspiration and application. Even when participants were satisfied, many asked for more practical examples, more time for discussion, and stronger links to real-life use. In several pilots they explicitly suggested follow-up pathways, internships, mentoring, additional workshops, or other ways to translate learning into something tangible soon after participation.

A final insight is about what seems most promising for scaling. Participants reacted particularly well to formats that connect them with peers, role models, employers, or concrete market opportunities.


VOICES OF STAKEHOLDERS

In addition to participants' feedback, we gathered stakeholder reflections through interviews and focus groups using a joint, flexible framework. Partners in each WIN region could use individual interviews, focus groups, or a combination, and were encouraged to speak not only with WIN Innovation Group members but also with stakeholders outside the groups when important sectors were not sufficiently represented.

Stakeholders involved in the WIN project represent a diverse ecosystem of actors who influence women's participation in the labour market at local and regional level. They were actively engaged already in the co-creation phase, contributing to the identification of key challenges, the development of social innovation ideas, and the design of pilot actions.

These stakeholders included representatives of public authorities and municipalities, employment services and labour market institutions, educational organisations such as schools and universities, business support organisations and employers, as well as civil society organisations working with women and vulnerable groups.

In practice, their involvement took different forms across pilot regions: schools and teachers supported outreach and participation in awareness-raising activities; employment services and local authorities helped identify relevant target groups and align actions with labour market needs; NGOs facilitated community engagement, mentoring, and networking; and business representatives contributed as role models, trainers, or partners in implementation. This cross-sector involvement proved essential not only for the successful delivery of pilot actions, but also for ensuring their relevance, ownership, and potential for sustainability beyond the project.



Across all regions, stakeholders highlighted transparency and clear goal-orientation in pilot selection and valued the opportunity for open discussion in the working groups. They stressed that *co-creation helped surface less visible, culturally embedded barriers affecting women's labour market participation*, and that pilots were concrete and linked to local needs.

They were also honest about constraints. In some regions, several topics were seen as equally urgent, but could not be implemented simultaneously due to capacity and project limits. **Limited timeframes, financial constraints, and administrative or legislative complexity were repeatedly mentioned, with a clear conclusion that demand for social innovations often outstripped the project's immediate capacity.**

Looking forward, stakeholders converged on one strategic message: pilots are a starting point, not an endpoint. They underlined the importance of institutional anchoring and stronger coordination across sectors and policy levels so that pilots connect with existing programmes rather than remaining isolated experiments. Beyond specific activities, they described trust, community, and self-driven collaboration as one of the greatest values produced by the pilot process, because these are foundations for longer-term change that institutions can build on.

Across regions, participants described what felt valuable in practice, while stakeholders described what would make this value last. When we read these perspectives together, a shared set of transferable approaches becomes visible, design choices that consistently strengthened the pilots and can inspire action elsewhere.

TRANSFERABLE APPROACHES AND GOOD PRACTICES

The WIN pilots were intentionally diverse because each region started from a different reality. Still, when we look across implementation and evaluation, a shared set of approaches emerges. These are not abstract principles. They describe what repeatedly helped pilots create real value in peripheral industrial contexts and what increased the chance that a pilot would matter beyond a single event.

First, the “container” matters as much as the content. Participants repeatedly valued feeling welcome, safe, and respected. This is not a soft add-on. It directly shapes whether people participate fully, whether they speak honestly about barriers, and whether they return. In several regions, the most meaningful early impact signal was simply that people stayed connected, came back, and brought others.



Second, learning needs to be practical and usable. Where pilots aimed at employability, entrepreneurship, or market access, participants asked for hands-on work, concrete examples, and enough time for complex topics. Practicality also means seeing a result, even a small one, such as a plan, a clearer next step, a visible output, or a skill that can be applied immediately. This is also where role models and real stories become most powerful. They work best when they are treated as learning material that shows realistic steps, trade-offs, and solutions, rather than as inspiration alone.



Third, pilots become stronger when they are designed for connection. Knowledge-building combined with peer contact reduces isolation and strengthens confidence, especially for women in transition or early entrepreneurship. Networking is not only a “nice extra.” It is one of the mechanisms through which information circulates, informal support emerges, and follow-up becomes possible, including mentoring relationships, collaborations, and new opportunities.



Fourth, outreach and inclusion depend on everyday communication routes. Adult audiences most often engage through social media and personal networks, while youth-oriented activities rely heavily on schools. This matters because the outreach channel influences who shows up, how diverse the group is, and how well the pilot reaches those who most need it. In peripheral contexts, trust-based communication is often a precondition for participation.



Finally, sustainability requires pathways and anchoring. Both participants and stakeholders repeatedly pointed to the importance of follow-up, mentoring, internships, job-shadowing, additional workshops, or clear links to services and employers. Without a pathway, even strong pilots risk remaining “a good experience” rather than a turning point. At the same time, long-term continuity is more likely when pilots are connected to existing labour market, municipal, and education initiatives, so that repetition and scaling become realistic. Throughout, work–life balance constraints remain a practical design factor: childcare, family responsibilities, time poverty, and transport shape who can participate and whether progress can be sustained.





RECOMMENDATIONS FROM KEY ACTORS

Alongside participant feedback, the WIN partnership also listened to stakeholders who shape local labour market conditions (e.g., employment services, regional development agencies, schools, municipalities.). Partners conducted interviews and focus groups with WIN Innovation Group members and external stakeholders, using a shared evaluation framework so that insights could be compared across regions while still reflecting local realities. These conversations helped us identify what should be strengthened beyond pilot delivery, and what conditions are needed for sustainable change in peripheral industrial regions.

Stakeholders repeatedly emphasised that pilots gain long-term value when they are anchored in existing regional strategies and programmes rather than remaining isolated project actions. This requires coordination across levels and sectors, and a clear framing of women's economic empowerment as regional development value. Where feasible, authorities can strengthen enabling conditions that influence participation and career continuity, especially childcare availability, family-friendly services, and support for flexible work arrangements.

A consistent message is that one-off events work best when they lead somewhere. Stakeholders recommend designing continuity: follow-up learning formats, mentoring, job-shadowing, or structured next steps that connect women to employers, services, and realistic opportunities. Employment services are well positioned to coordinate reskilling and upskilling pathways, create repeated offerings that people can access over time, and act as a bridge between women, employers, and local support ecosystems.

Stakeholders see employers not only as beneficiaries of a stronger workforce, but as active contributors to change. Employer sensitisation matters, especially in industrial

contexts where workplace culture and informal norms influence women's opportunities. Chambers and employers can make a concrete difference by participating as mentors after trainings, offering job-shadowing or practice-based experiences, and strengthening supportive workplace practices, including flexibility where possible.

The pilots show the value of trusted community structures that combine peer support with practical learning and visibility. Stakeholders recommend strengthening partnerships with institutions and employers so that networks do not remain isolated “islands,” but become bridges to opportunities and services. Civil society actors can also play a strong role in outreach, especially through personal networks and community trust, which in several regions proved essential for engagement.

Stakeholders underline that career pathways and stereotypes start shaping choices early. Schools, counselling services, and youth organisations can strengthen early awareness, make professions more visible, and bring real career stories closer to learners. Where regions want more women in STEM and technical fields, education actors are crucial in helping girls see options as realistic and supported. For youth-oriented pilots, school embedding is also one of the most reliable outreach pathways.



FROM PILOTS TO PATHWAYS

Every social innovation begins with a small act of courage. A group of people who decide to look at a familiar problem differently and test whether change is possible in real life. This booklet was created to honour those moments and to make them visible beyond the WIN partnership.

Across seven peripheral industrial regions in the Danube area, WIN Innovation Groups and local partners turned ideas into pilot actions. They worked with real constraints, local cultures, and uneven opportunity structures. The results presented here are not perfect solutions. They are tested steps forward, with evidence of what people valued, what helped pilots work, and what needs to be strengthened next.

What the pilots show is simple and important. Meaningful progress rarely comes from one single measure. It comes from combinations: visibility paired with practical learning, supportive spaces connected to real opportunities, awareness linked to follow-up and institutional support. When these elements come together, even short pilots can create something that lasts: confidence, skills, relationships, and a sense of direction.

By learning from these pilots, you join a wider movement of practitioners and regional actors working for more inclusive, fair, and resilient labour markets. The approaches in this booklet are not recipes to copy. They are living practices that invite adaptation, experimentation, and learning, including learning from what did not work as expected.

Remember: meaningful change is rarely fast, but it becomes real when it is shared. As this booklet closes, the work continues in regions, organisations, and communities. Each mentoring relationship, each follow-up workshop, each partnership between institutions and local networks can turn a pilot into a pathway, and a pathway into a new normal.

If you build on this work, we invite you to share your experiences and lessons with others. This is how regional practice grows into a community of learning, and how social innovations travel to places where they are needed most.

The WIN consortium thanks every WIN Innovation Group coordinator, local partner, stakeholder, and participant who contributed time, trust, and imagination to this journey. May this booklet be a source of inspiration, practical insight, and encouragement for many more.

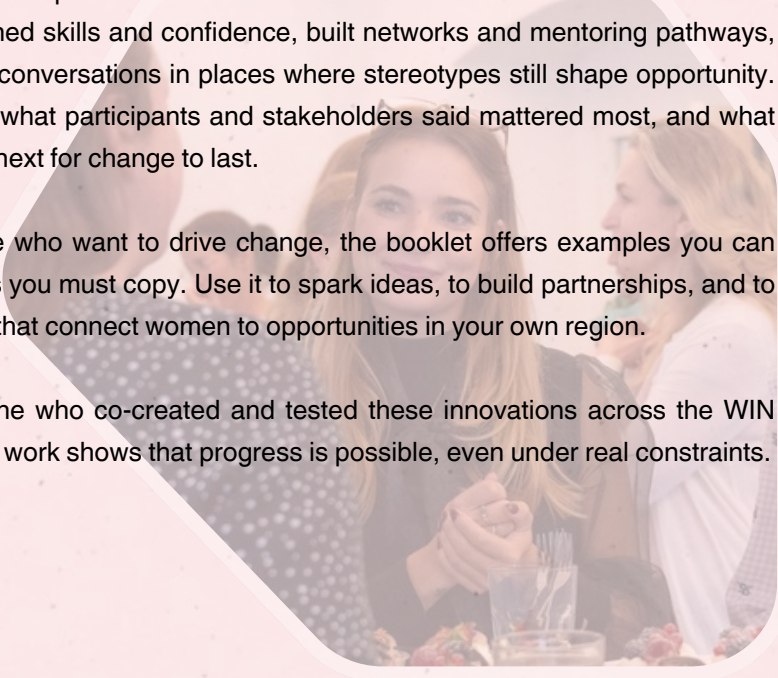
Change starts small, but it grows when it is shared.

This booklet tells the story of what WIN made possible in seven peripheral industrial regions of the Danube Region. It gathers the ideas that local stakeholders created, the innovations that were piloted, and the practical lessons that emerged when those ideas were tested in real communities.

Inside, you will find implemented social innovations that made women's work more visible, strengthened skills and confidence, built networks and mentoring pathways, and opened new conversations in places where stereotypes still shape opportunity. You will also find what participants and stakeholders said mattered most, and what needs to happen next for change to last.

Written for people who want to drive change, the booklet offers examples you can adapt, not models you must copy. Use it to spark ideas, to build partnerships, and to design pathways that connect women to opportunities in your own region.

We thank everyone who co-created and tested these innovations across the WIN partnership. Their work shows that progress is possible, even under real constraints.



Interreg
Danube Region



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WIN