



# Women Entrepreneurship and Education

*e-zine*

WeRin Project

| Issue 3/July 2022

*Photo by Alexander Suhorucov*



# Welcome to the WeRin Project Newsletter!

We are delighted to introduce you to the bi-annual magazine dedicated to Women Entrepreneurs in Regional Inclusive Entrepreneurial Ecosystems (WeRin), a forward-thinking European initiative with a team of 14 partners who are passionate about increasing the share of female graduate entrepreneurs.

Through this project, we, a group of academics and practitioners passionate about entrepreneurship, aim to make entrepreneurship education and support programmes more inclusive for women.

## **What is in this issue?**

Our third issue brings you the latest updates from the project as well as new role models. Additionally, we introduce you to some more members of our consortium.

We begin our third issue by inviting you to catch up on the latest news from the WeRin project, including an overview of the partner meeting that took place during June in the city of Amsterdam (p. 5). Hear about the status of the WeRin Principles deliverable and the WeRin workshop that some of

our partners delivered during the UIIN Annual Conference in June (p. 7, 8). Additionally, get an update from our coordinator on the status of the project and the next steps for the consortium (p. 10).

We continue this e-zine by placing the spotlight on a new selection of fascinating women entrepreneurs. Hear from Julia Kirsch (Generation F) (p. 13), Kristina Bajsić Bogović (Horvat & Zebec & Bajsić Bogović) (p. 14) and Tricia Balfe (XMLdation) (p. 15).

To conclude, learn about the approach to supporting women entrepreneurs in science at North Rhine-Westphalia (p.16) and meet another one of our project partners: ECWT (Norway) (p. 20).

We wish you a pleasant read!

*University Industry Innovation Network (UIIN)  
on behalf of the WeRin Project Consortium*

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# News from WeRin



# WeRin Partner Meeting in Amsterdam

*Author: Dr. Sarah Davis (MTU Hincks Centre)*

Dr. Sarah Davis, representing MTU's Hincks Centre and Rubicon Centre, reports on our very first all-partner, in-person meeting for the Erasmus+ WeRin project. It took place on the 10th of June 2022 in Impact Hub, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

All partners found their way to Linnaeusstraat 2C, where we were welcomed and ably hosted by Margot Kemps of Impact Hub. A full agenda was planned for partners who travelled from Croatia, Ireland, Turkey, Norway and Germany to this transnational partner meeting for the Women Entrepreneurs in Regional Inclusive Entrepreneurial Ecosystems (WeRin) Project.

The WeRin project has been going from strength to strength and our lead partner, Junior Professor in Entrepreneurship and International Business Development, Dr. Sue Rossano-Rivera from Münster University of Applied Sciences in Germany, formally welcomed us all. She encouraged us to celebrate the many successes that the WeRin consortium has achieved during the first year and a half of this important inclusivity project.

These successes include meeting the ambitious project milestones, exceeding our dissemination targets, and being awarded a SocialEU award for our dissemination editorial plan led by Momentum. Partners have also been busy disseminating the project information and findings at peer-reviewed conferences, such as the ECSB's RENT and 3e conferences, with submissions to the Academy of Management and Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship (ISBE) conferences.



WeRin's work-to-date was reviewed by Saskia Stoker of Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, who is bringing the third work package of data collection about the current entrepreneurial ecosystems to a successful conclusion, with the final outstanding element to provide cases of good practice.

Much progress has been made with the fourth work package, with principles for an inclusive ecosystem agreed on by all partners. The next stage in this work phase, which is led by Kristina Detelj of the University of Zagreb, focuses on the development of a WeRin Knowledge Port that supports the principles we have identified for an inclusive ecosystem.

The partners will begin to populate a curated knowledge port of information and develop a training approach that can be used to navigate the resources for gender-inclusive ecosystems. A key part of this will be the design of psychological nudges and this is planned to be conducted with students in a design exercise within the upcoming semester. The Hincks Centre will lead the upcoming fifth work package which will work on capacity building and develop a community of practice for gender-inclusive entrepreneurial education ecosystems.

As our other work packages are progressing, we are due to submit our first interim report to the European Commission this summer.

WeRin has accomplished a great deal and already produced many outputs (Role Model Exemplars, Literature Review, Regional Reports) with the support of our partners, our institutions, and our networks. We are ambitious to achieve more and support women in our entrepreneurial ecosystems. We are delighted and grateful for the wealth of support for this Erasmus+ WeRin project.



# WeRin Principles – The status of deliverable

*Authors: Kristina Detelj and Karolina Kokot (FOI UNIZG)*

In the work package "Design and Deployment" (WP4), WeRin partners, led by the University of Zagreb, the Faculty of Organization and Informatics (FOI UNIZG), had to create one of the fundamental deliverables - the WeRin Principles. The project team of the FOI UNIZG created a draft version of the principles through brainstorming after a thorough analysis of the country reports from WP3 and the reports on the International and Regional Think Tanks that were held at the end of 2021.

The draft of the WeRin Principles were presented at a coordination project team meeting in June in Amsterdam. After a fruitful discussion between the participants to collect feedback, comments and ideas from other project partners, the final WeRin Principles were agreed upon. These are: **100% inclusivity, Relatable role models, Realistic picture of entrepreneurship, Opportunity-driven entrepreneurship, Inclusive support and finance and Structural change in the ecosystem.**

The first principle of 100% inclusivity emphasizes the importance of inclusivity, ie. it is necessary to promote inclusive and diverse entrepreneurship in the system and in networks (cooperation and equality of all). The principle of the Relatable role models emphasizes the need to make female role models visible in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and the necessity to include entrepreneurship education in earlier stages of education systems. The next principle of Realistic picture of entrepreneurship emphasizes a holistic view of entrepreneurship — not just sharing the good examples stories, but also sharing failure experiences from all the entrepreneurs and lessons learned from experience.



The principle of Opportunity-driven entrepreneurship emphasizes the need to include aims of entrepreneurship, such as sustainability, social mission, and value creation instead of focusing only on profit & business growth. The principle of Inclusive support and finance points to the need to increase the visibility, accessibility and equity of the support programmes and financing schemes in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. The last principle of Structural change in the ecosystem refers to the increasing engagement with stakeholders in the ecosystem to overcome structural barriers for female entrepreneurs.

The principles are now the basis for the coming project activities, such as the development of the WeRin Knowledge Port, which will integrate open WeRin resources organized according to the WeRin Principles. The Regional reports, Principles and Knowledge Port with its resources will all be included in the WeRin Toolbox for practical implementation of the WeRLearnIn Approach. The Approach is going to be pilot tested in the next work package on Implementation - Capacity Building and Community of Practice (WP5), during the Fall semester 2022.



# Workshop: Towards Inclusive Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

*Author: Samantha Carty (Momentum)*

On Day 3, 15th June 2022, the UIIN conference saw WeRin host an interactive workshop titled: Towards Inclusive Entrepreneurial Ecosystems.

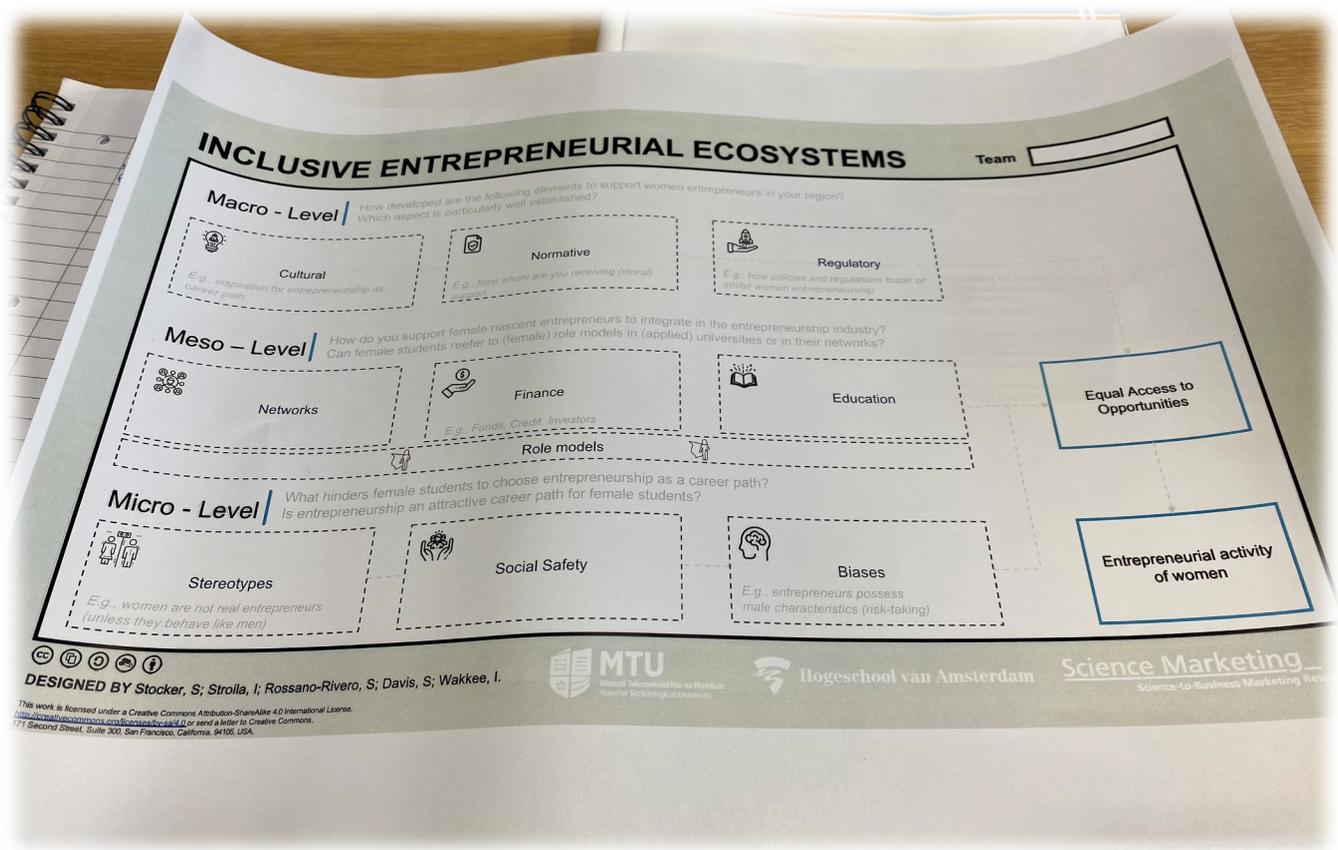
Dr. Sue Rossano-Rivero, FH Münster, presented our project aims and partners to a sizable audience. She was supported by Dr. Ingrid Wakkee and Saskia Stoker of Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, who gave an overview of the current research and projects that are already being undertaken on the topic of inclusive entrepreneurship.

They put special emphasis on key insights generated so far, with a particular focus on insights about female entrepreneurship but

with links to other 'underrepresented' groups.

This was followed by an introduction to the Inclusive Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Canvas. This canvas was developed by Rossano-Rivero and Stroila (2022) based on a recent paper by Stoker et al (2021).

This canvas enables practitioners to model macro, meso, and micro levels elements of their local entrepreneurial ecosystems and allows them to engage in a structured discussion in which they compare and contrast different (institutional and regional) ecosystems and develop novel ideas on how to improve upon this inclusivity.



The workshop could then begin in earnest as every group received their canvas to complete according to their institutional or regional ecosystem. The groups looked at each level (macro, meso, and micro) across several different topics such as finance, stereotypes, networks, regulatory, and education to name a few. We shared our experiences from our ecosystems and then with a selection of green and red stickers furnished by Iulia Stroila, FH Münster we coded our canvases according to whether an element was present in the ecosystem or not and to what extent it helps or hinders inclusivity.

We then came together as one collective group to describe our ecosystems and formulate ideas on how to improve the current situation. This was the most revealing part of the workshop as we developed a greater understanding of the differences between ecosystems which was striking across countries and cultures. We all learned that children in Finland take part in an entrepreneur week at primary school level and unanimously agreed on the importance of this kind of early-stage role modeling. We look forward to more detailed findings from this workshop and how we plan the next steps.

# Where is WeRin going after defining the WeRin Learning Principles

*Author: Dr. Sue Rossano-Rivero (FH Münster)*



Our project has reached a very exciting stage of sense making. After completing our research activities, the WeRin consortium has worked together to include other stakeholders in the research phase to complement our findings and make sense of what the research findings mean for the completion of our main goal: Creating more inclusive entrepreneurial education and training approaches.

Based on the outcomes of the research phase, our partners from University of Zagreb in Croatia and from the European Center for Women and Technology (ECWT) in Norway have coordinated the design of a set of guiding principles and underlying assumptions of what our Inclusive entrepreneurship accusation and training approach will be.

The educational and training approach from WeRin entitled the WeRlearnIn Approach is based on the following principles:

## 1. **100% Inclusivity**

- Targeting gender barriers and obstacles for women entrepreneurs with a view to fostering wider inclusivity
- Promoting inclusive and diverse entrepreneurship in the system and in networks (cooperation and equality of all)
- Raising awareness of hidden biases

## 2. **Relatable role models**

- Making female role models more visible in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, including in entrepreneurship education at the earlier education stages
- Presenting known, as well as unknown, local examples (they are more accessible and relatable, boosting the motivation and confidence of potential women entrepreneurs)

## 3. **Realistic picture of entrepreneurship**

- Including a holistic view of entrepreneurship - not just good example stories, but also sharing lessons learned and failure experiences from all types of entrepreneurs

## 4. **Opportunity-driven entrepreneurship**

- Changing the narratives that describe entrepreneurship from solo hero to ecosystem networks and the resource providers
- Including broader aims of entrepreneurship, such as sustainability, social mission, and value creation instead of focusing only on profit & business growth

*Continued*

### 5. Inclusive support and finance

- Increasing the visibility, accessibility and equity of the support programmes and financing schemes in the entrepreneurial ecosystem
- Improving financial and investment literacy among nascent entrepreneurs

### 6. Structural change in the ecosystem

- Increasing engagement with stakeholders in the ecosystem to overcome structural barriers for female entrepreneurs

“

*Our project has reached a very exciting stage of sense making*

”

These Principles will serve as a guide to develop two main deliverables in the project:

**1. A set of nudges that can support the embeddedness of more women in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.**

**2. Develop a set of educational resources and pedagogical approaches that can be used to teach entrepreneurship under the WeRin Principles.**

The partners of the WeRin consortium are currently gathering this content and curating Open Educational Resources that tackle the WeRin Principles. During the following months we will start developing the digital interface that will host the educational resources and will be used as a knowledge port of open access for all trainers and educators on entrepreneurship in Europe. In addition to having this knowledge port as a repository of resources, we will also design the Beta version of the WeRin Toolbox that will be pilot tested by educators and trainers on entrepreneurship in Europe.

We expect to start in September with the organisation of Capacity Building sessions for the educators and trainers on entrepreneurship that will be testing the WeRin Toolbox and Learning approach. Stay tuned for more information [here!](#)





# Meet the Change-Makers

*Photo by Mikhail Nilov from Pexels*



# My entrepreneurial journey....



Julia Kirsch



Business Name

Generation f [www.generation-f.com](http://www.generation-f.com)



Place  
Germany



Year started as entrepreneur  
2020



Number of employees  
3



What is your highest level of education?  
Masters

My enthusiasm for entrepreneurship was sparked during an internship in the vibrant innovation ecosystem of Tel Aviv. Ever since, I was enthusiastic about finding new ways to empower people through innovation. Becoming an entrepreneur was simply the next step I had to take in order to achieve this goal.

### My targets are

1. To empower individuals by creating unique digital educational and growth opportunities.
2. To show that diverse backgrounds are key for innovation and progress.
3. My goal is to contribute to a diverse, equal and sustainable economy.

### My Challenges are

- Building and scaling a bootstrapped impact startup.
- Focusing on one step at a time.
- Proving that diversity and equality are essential to a successful economy, not a charity.

### This is what characterises me

1. Passion
2. Curiosity
3. Enthusiasm

### The brands that inspire me



gitti



### The role models that inspire me:

Verena Pausder  
Glennon Doyle

Linda Zervakis  
Mai Thi Nguyen-Kim

### Which networks are you involved in?

REACH Euregio  
Wayra Germany Innovators Room

### My advice to girls and women who want to realise their dreams:

1. Dare to jump into the cold water! It won't get warmer if you wait longer.
2. Lift each other up! Build communities, allies and friendships to support each other, cheer each other on and share your successes. You don't have to do it all by yourself!
3. Stay true to yourself! No matter how big, scary or unique an opportunity may look- listen to your gut and decide for yourself which challenges you want to tackle.

### When I'm not working:

Hiking  
Running & Yoga  
Going out with friends

My motto is:  
Start before you're ready!



[www.werinproject.eu](http://www.werinproject.eu)



# My entrepreneurial journey....

Founder partner member of the management board of a Law firm.  
Owner of Pripreme iuridica d.o.o. and Rependo terra d.o.o  
Director of Poliklinika Kinemed d.o.o.  
Certificate of the Global Campus MOOC : Children Deprived of Liberty: enacting the recommendations of the UN Global Study  
Certificate of the Global Campus MOOC : Business & Human Rights  
Intellectual Property Certificate: WIPO  
Certificate of the Croatian Mediation Association: Representation in Mediation  
Youngest member of the Varaždin Forum against Corruption

### My targets are

1. I want to teach more people how to be a good lawyer
2. I strive to learn and stay creative
3. My goal is to help people who suffer injustice.

### My Challenges are

Taking care of every detail and predicting multiple possibilities  
Making more time for sports and mindfulness  
Implementing all the new ideas I think of  
Impacting a broader circle with law

### This is what characterises me

1. Dedicated
2. Passionate
3. Reliable

### The brands that inspire me

**PANGAIA**

### The role models that inspire me:

Biljana Dušić      Savina Atai  
Deepak Chopra      Robin Sharma

### Which networks are you integrated in?

Croatian Bar Association  
Croatian Mediation Association  
ICC Croatia

### My advice to girls and women who want to realise their dreams:

1. You don't have to choose between family and career
2. Don't just wish for something, work towards it
3. Your past doesn't define you. You can reinvent yourself for better

### When I'm not working:

I spend time with family, enjoy fitness, travelling, learning and reading.

## Kristina Bajsić Bogović



Business Name  
Horvat & Zebec & Bajsić Bogović  
[Horvat & Zebec & Bajsić Bogović - About Us \(od-hzb.hr](http://Horvat & Zebec & Bajsić Bogović - About Us (od-hzb.hr)



Place  
Zagreb, Croatia



Year started as entrepreneur  
2015



Number of employees  
10



What is your highest level of education?  
Law Graduate DIPL. IUR.

My motto is:  
“Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all.”- Helen Keller



www.werinproject.eu

# My entrepreneurial journey....



## Tricia Balfe



Business Name

XMLdation [www.xmldation.com](http://www.xmldation.com)



Place  
Ireland & Finland



Year started as entrepreneur  
2007



Number of employees  
20



What is your highest level of education?  
Masters

I co-founded a software company in 2007 with a 'pure technology' idea. I had no background in product management or sales. Now we sell our product in three continents.

### My targets are

I want the business to grow and I want the business to be good for its employees, customers and investors/owners.

### My Challenges are

Figuring out how to navigate a world that is dominated by very large companies

### This is what characterises me

1. Independent 2. Tenacious

### The brands that inspire me

**WIKIPEDIA**  
The Free Encyclopedia

### The role models that inspire me:

Angela Merkel and people I know personally who have run businesses through good and bad times

### Which networks are you involved in?

Bank payments related networks internationally

### My advice to girls and women who want to realise their dreams:

1. If you want to do something, go for it.
2. Listen to others but do what you think is right yourself and be patient.
3. Many, many successful people worry that they are not good enough. You won't know whether you are good enough until you try.

### When I'm not working:

Family and food. I enjoy outdoor stuff: walking, cycling, swimming, gardening. Reading of all sorts, and music.

My motto is:  
Keep on going!



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# “Women Entrepreneurs in Science”: The Approach in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany

*Author: Hugo Buitrago (ACEEU)*

North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) is the hottest spot in Germany for start-ups. According to the German Start-up Monitor, 19.1% of the start-ups in the country are headquartered in NRW, followed by 17.7% in Berlin and 12.8% in the Rhine-Ruhr metropolitan region. Nevertheless, there is an evident gender gap among the start-up founders. According to the Female Founders Monitor 2019, “the proportion of women in the start-up world has increased slowly and steadily in recent years, but is still at a very low level at 15.1%” (this, compared to the 84.9% male founders). For that reason, the Ministry of Economics, Innovation, Digitalization and Energy of the state NRW supported the project “Women Entrepreneurs in Science” as part of the Excellence Start-up Center Initiative.

The Excellence Start-up Center NRW was launched in 2018, with a total investment of 116 million euros from the Ministry of Economics, Innovation, Digitalization and Energy. The Centre focuses on supporting universities due to their decisive contribution to the transfer of research results, the development of entrepreneurial thinking and acting, and the support they offer to create innovative start-ups. It aims to make good ideas turn into new companies faster and set the foundation for future growth of the region. The funding period will end in 2024 and is currently supporting initiatives in six start-up centres:

- Integrated Tech Incubator at RWTH Aachen,
- WORLDFACTORY Start-up Centre (WSC) at Ruhr University Bochum,
- Centre for Entrepreneurship & Transfer (CET) at Technical University Dortmund,
- Gateway Excellence Start-up Centre at University of Cologne,
- REACH EUREGIO Start-up Centre at Westfälische Wilhelms University Münster,
- Excellence Start-up Centre Ostwestfalen-Lippe (ESC.OWL) at University of Paderborn.

Additional to the support to these six start-up centres, the Excellence Start-up Center NRW also supports innovative projects. As an accompanying measure, specific institutions have received funding up to 2024 to develop transversal projects such as EnableUS at the University of Siegen, the Bonn Hub for Algorithmic Innovations in Medicine at the University Hospital Bonn, and Women Entrepreneurs in Science at the University of Wuppertal, among others.



## **Women Entrepreneurs in Science: “More women for the start-up scene!”**

Within the framework of the Women Entrepreneurs in Science (WES) project, the University of Wuppertal acts as a hub open to all cooperating universities in NRW to network female founders and women interested in founding a company. As declared by Prof. Dr. Christine Volkmann, initiator of the project, “with Women Entrepreneurs in Science, we want to highlight female founders and entrepreneurs as role models.

## Continued

We aim to develop a positive and inspiring environment for female founders as well as a common drive". The project has been designed to benefit women founders, aspiring women entrepreneurs, female students, female early career researchers, and female employees in NRW.

The main reasons to establish WES were the gender gap among founders and the fact that there are currently over 700,000 students in North Rhine-Westphalia and just under 50% of them are women. This contrasts with the proportion of women founders, which is just about 15%. The low percentage of women founders reveals a large untapped potential at universities, especially since female founders are statistically more successful than male founders.



WES brings together experts in women's entrepreneurship to provide a variety of solutions for women interested in founding their own companies to successfully implement and advance their ideas. Additionally, the cooperation with diverse universities from NRW also offers women founders and their start-ups room to grow across the region, access to advice, coaching, workshops and events, and connection to a broader network.

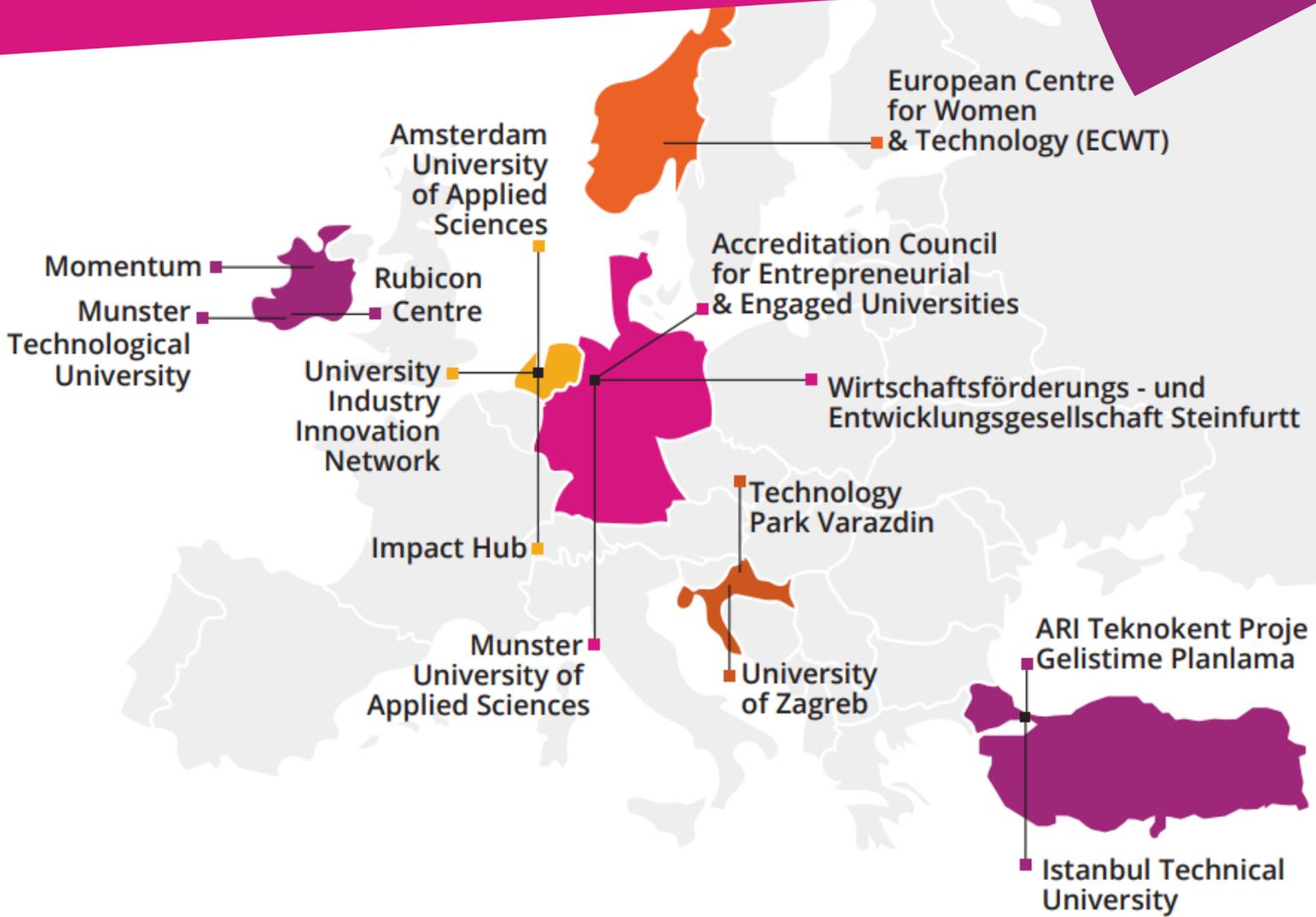
As part of the WES initiative at the University of Wuppertal, a higher education network for women starting their own businesses is emerging. This network brings together female founders and women interested in founding a company at NRW universities.

The goal is to create a positive, inspiring environment and a collective enthusiasm for entrepreneurship. This network brings together aspiring entrepreneurs, mentors, investors and founders to advance women's entrepreneurship through diverse channels like Slack and keynote speeches, among others.

In summary, the team at WES is working to raise the potential of women interested in becoming entrepreneurs in the university context. Additionally, they act as the central contact point for assisting universities in NRW in establishing programs for supporting their aspiring women entrepreneurs. WES is creating new opportunities for women in the start-up scene contributing to network building, growth consolidation, access to investors, and exchange with regional women role models. WES benefits both universities' entrepreneurial support structures and aspiring women entrepreneurs, so that women can seize their opportunities to consolidate their business ideas, realize their dreams and celebrate their successes.

# Meet the WeRin partners





# Our WeRin partnership across Europe

Funded by the ERASMUS+ Knowledge Alliance programme, the Women Entrepreneurs in Regional Inclusive Entrepreneurial Ecosystems – WeRin Project unites **14 partners** from network organizations, associations, research institutes, academia and businesses based in six countries in Europe.

Their expertise and strong reputation make a solid foundation for successful achievement of the intended project results.



# European Centre for Women and Technology (ECWT) - Safeguarding the gender element of the project

*Author: Dimitris Raftopoulos (ECWT)*

The European Centre for Women and Technology (ECWT) provides a European level meeting place for leading public-private actors, academia and NGOs collaborating for measurably and significantly increasing the number of girls and women in technology in general and ICT in specific.

ECWT serves as a European single point of contact for information, collection and analysis of data, research and the development of appropriate methodological tools to attract more girls to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), for nurturing and retaining women in the knowledge economy through industry and entrepreneurial careers, promoting female talent to provide added value to ICT solutions, supporting more female ICT business start-ups and consolidating the largest network for closing the Digital Gender Gap in Europe.

ECWT is led by the desire to collaborate with and give added value to already existing structures and organizations, by sharing knowledge and best practices and creating synergies, leveraging resources, research and progress.

As part of the WeRin project, ECWT is responsible of leading Work Package 9 – Evaluation – having as its main objective to determine whether the project planning and implementation are effective, and the planned results and expected impact are met. The above objectives are benchmarked using a validation methodology that sets the framework, procedures and approach which will help the Alliance to safeguard the “Gender” dimension of the whole project assuring that all of its actions and deliverables support the realisation of WeRin’s vision “To develop more inclusive entrepreneurship education programmes and ecosystems”. Additionally, it has a horizontal involvement in all WPs and co-leads and leads several project Tasks.



## Meet the ECWT project team



**Eva Fabry**

ECWT Director and ECWT's WeRin Project Coordinator



**Dimitris Raftopoulos**

EU Affairs Project Manager and ECWT's WeRin Lead Researcher

The logo for WeRin features the text "WeRin" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The letter "i" is lowercase and has a small orange dot above it. To the right of the text is a circular graphic composed of several overlapping, fan-shaped segments in various colors: purple, pink, orange, and yellow. The background of the page is white with large, abstract shapes in orange, purple, and pink. The text "WeRin" is positioned in the upper right quadrant.

# WeRin

## CONTACT

**Jun. Prof. Dr. Sue Rossano-Rivero**

WeRin Project Lead

Science-to-Business Marketing Research  
Centre

rossano@fh-muenster.de

[www.werinproject.eu](http://www.werinproject.eu)

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