A photograph of three women in a meeting. One woman on the left is pointing at a document held by another woman in the center. A third woman on the right is looking at the document. The background is bright and out of focus. The image is partially overlaid by a large pink and purple graphic on the left side.

Women Entrepreneurship and Education

e-zine



WeRin Project

| Issue 5/July 2023



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 fifth issue brings you the latest updates from the project as well as new role models that we want to introduce. Additionally, we share with you some contributions and experiences from our consortium.

To start, we want to encourage you to catch up on the latest news from the WeRin project, including the development of the WeRLearnin Approach and the WeRin Knowledge Port (p. 5 and p. 6). Read about the International Capacity Building Session that took place in Cork, Ireland where all partners got together to take the next steps in the implementation of the project (p. 8).

We continue this e-zine by placing the spotlight on a new selection of fascinating women entrepreneurs: Julie Munneke (Tiny Library) (p. 11), Julia Kümper (Ventreurs) (p. 12) and Lieke Pijpers (The Next Closet) (p. 13).

To conclude, dive into the personal and professional experiences and thoughts of some of the partners of our WeRin consortium (p. 15 and p. 18)

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 Launches the WeRLearnin Approach

The **WeRLearnin Approach** is now available for download.

The WeRin project partners prepared the WeRLearnin Approach as guidelines for all stakeholders that explain how to utilise the collected project materials to achieve goals in their entrepreneurship teaching and affect their respective ecosystems. The brochure describes The WeRLearnin Approach that includes the WeRin Principles, WeRin Nudges, WeRin Knowledge Port, WeRin Toolbox, designed and developed based on the research and discussions of different stakeholders in the entrepreneurial ecosystems.

As lead partner of work package four, "Design and Deployment," the FOI project team defined the Approach content, and Momentum led its design with feedback and cooperation from all the consortium partners. The FOI team were also responsible for the creation of the Knowledge Port platform in conjunction with Momentum's IT team. The free-of-charge platform which stores open access resources is intended for entrepreneurship educators, mentors and programme managers to deliver pilot testing sessions and for all shareholders in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

With more than 120 educational resources, each is categorised to ensure that all shareholders can investigate them for global and regional content of their entrepreneurial ecosystem.



WeRLearnin Approach

An innovative and Inclusive Learning Approach for female students in higher education and graduate aspiring women entrepreneurs.

The purpose of our project is to target entrepreneurship educators (professors, lecturers, mentors, coaches) and entrepreneurship programme managers in higher education institutions (HEIs), university incubators, and in non-academic organisations in charge of promoting and supporting entrepreneurship in the broader regional entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Our consortium performed research to answer the following question:

How can we enhance the inclusivity of regional entrepreneurial ecosystems and embeddedness of female entrepreneurs therein, through the design of more inclusive academic and non-academic entrepreneurship education and support programs?

The expected improvement is the result of learning from the current state of research on women entrepreneurship (with an academic background), gender inclusivity, and inclusive regional entrepreneurial ecosystems. Additionally, the research included gathering existing good practices of inclusive entrepreneurial education and support and finding inspirational female role models.

Entrepreneurship educators at HEIs will directly benefit from the project through the improvement of their skills and knowledge to design a more inclusive entrepreneurship education program, as well as benefit from the regional and international networks established during the project lifetime. Together with the entrepreneurship programme managers who successfully participated in the Capacity Building

Sessions (CBS), they will be able to apply their knowledge and skills in a pilot test with the final users (female students, aspiring female entrepreneurs and female entrepreneurs seeking growth).

The benefits to the final users is morefold. Female students and aspiring female entrepreneurs will benefit from close interaction with female entrepreneurial role models (developing inspiration and motivation, increasing self-efficacy, learning by example what the entrepreneurial journey looks like, learning by support).

This will bridge generations in two ways:

- 01 Experienced entrepreneurs pass on their knowledge and experience to the younger generations in entrepreneurship, and
- 02 One generation of female students and female aspiring entrepreneurs profile the role model women entrepreneurs and another generation of these target groups will use this revised material from the Pilot Tests, delivered later in the project.

Check out this and other blog articles on the [WeRin Project website](https://www.werinproject.eu).

The WeRin Knowledge Port: A Virtual Platform To Foster Female Entrepreneurship

The WeRin project is proud to announce the launch of the WeRin Knowledge Port, a virtual platform of essential resources to learn about inclusive female entrepreneurship. These open educational resources support the implementation of teaching and learning strategies in higher education programmes.

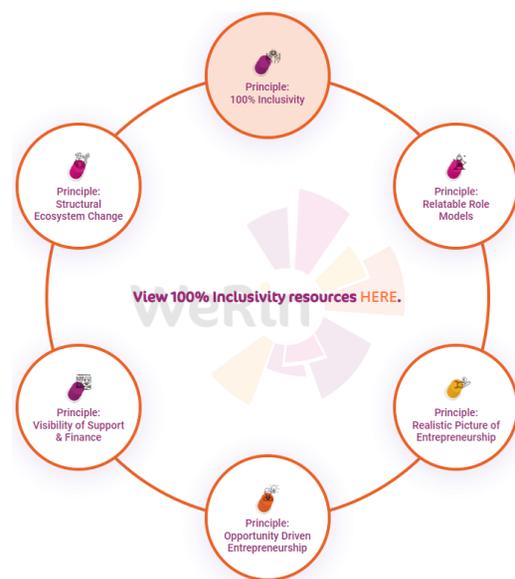
The materials contained in the WeRin Knowledge Port allow blended and independent learning for students and mentors, entrepreneurship educators and directors of entrepreneurship programmes in academic and non-academic institutions.

The materials are organised around the six WeRin Principles designed to foster inclusive entrepreneurship education and support programs:

- 100% Inclusivity
- Relatable role models
- Realistic picture of entrepreneurship
- Opportunity-driven entrepreneurship
- Visibility of support and finance
- Structural ecosystem change

Each of these core principles is supported by teaching guides, videos, case studies, papers, quizzes, tools, and other open resources with easy access. These resources are designed to provide a comprehensive learning experience, enabling users to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to support female entrepreneurs.

Research shows that women entrepreneurs face unique challenges, including limited access to capital, gender biases, and limited access to networks and resources ([See WeRin Literature Review](#)). These challenges can hinder their ability to start and grow successful businesses, which has a significant impact on the economy and society.



Higher education institutions and entrepreneurship support programmes have a critical role to play in promoting and supporting female entrepreneurship. They can provide the necessary resources and support to overcome the challenges women face and succeed in their ventures. Through initiatives such as the WeRin Knowledge Port, academic and non-academic institutions can promote inclusive entrepreneurship and create a supportive environment for women entrepreneurs.

The WeRin Knowledge Port: A Virtual Platform To Foster Female Entrepreneurship

Supporting female entrepreneurship can help to promote economic growth and development. Women entrepreneurs are essential contributors to the economy, and supporting their ventures can help to create jobs and drive economic growth.

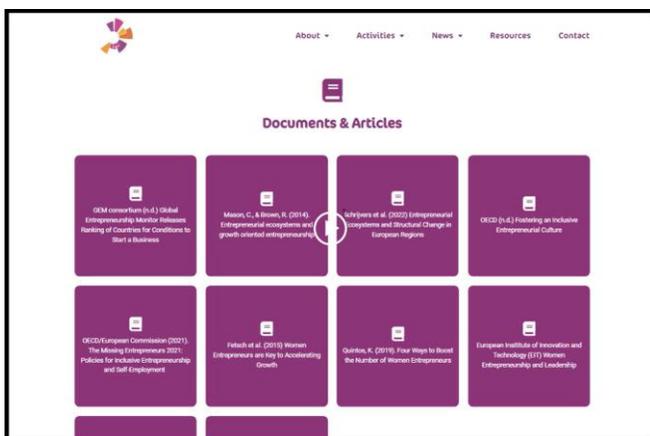
Promoting female entrepreneurship can help to address gender inequality. By providing the necessary resources and support, higher education institutions can help to create a more even playing field for women entrepreneurs, promoting gender equality and empowering women to achieve their full potential.

ventures, higher education institutions can foster innovation and creativity, driving growth and development.

Accordingly, with a diverse range of materials that include each of the WeRin Principles, the WeRin Knowledge Port provides a comprehensive learning experience that can help to overcome the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs.

We invite you to check out our free-to-use platform to find inspiration for supporting female entrepreneurs.

[Visit the WeRin Knowledge Port](#)



[Watch the video explanation](#)

Furthermore, supporting female entrepreneurship can help to promote innovation and creativity. Women entrepreneurs bring unique perspectives and ideas to the table, and by supporting their



Developing Capacities for Fostering Inclusive Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

Author: Hugo Buitrago, ACEEU

The WeRin Project successfully launched the WeRin International Capacity Building Programme on gender, inclusivity, and entrepreneurial ecosystems in May 2023, hosted by Munster Technological University in Cork, Ireland.

The two-day face-to-face session was a scenario for discussing the implications of inclusive entrepreneurship for education and support programs. This capacity-building session aimed at developing the necessary skills to design and deliver more inclusive programmes in diverse European regions as a measure to promote the active consolidation of inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems.

The WeRin International Capacity Building Programme is the first step towards the

development of the WeRin Local Capacity-Building Sessions in the five countries represented in the project: Croatia, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Turkey. Local sessions will transfer the knowledge and outcomes of the project to a wider regional entrepreneurial ecosystem. They will be delivered to educators, trainers and programme managers involved in promoting and supporting entrepreneurship.

The WeRin International Capacity Building Programme in Ireland gathered student entrepreneurs, educators, and programme managers in the field of entrepreneurship. It provided training on the pedagogical skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for utilising the WeRin Toolbox and delivering the WeRLearning Approach.



The event had inspirational keynote speeches such as “Women’s Entrepreneurship and Neoliberalism” by Dr Lorna Treanor from the University of Nottingham and “Understanding Women in Entrepreneurship: Inclusive Strategies for Education” by Professor Helle Neergaard from Aarhus University.

Additionally, the event immersed the participants in the six WeRin Principles: **100% Inclusivity, Relatable role models, Realistic picture of entrepreneurship, Opportunity-driven entrepreneurship, Visibility of support and finance, and Structural ecosystem change.** Each principle was enhanced with valuable resources, insights, and feedback to define the key dimensions of inclusive entrepreneurship. Each principle was enhanced with valuable resources,

insights, and feedback to define the key dimensions of inclusive entrepreneurship.

The WeRin International Capacity Building Programme was an enriching experience for both the project team and the external participants. It fostered valuable discussions within the consortium, addressing the project’s principles, future steps, networking opportunities, and most importantly, enhancing the commitment to promoting women’s entrepreneurship in diverse regions.



Meet the Change-Makers

As part of the WeRin research and discovery phase, we showcased successful female role model entrepreneurs already embedded in the regional ecosystem.

By highlighting tenacious, ambitious and resourceful female entrepreneur role models and sharing their realistic advice on how they are succeeding, despite existing barriers, we take a step to strengthening female graduate entrepreneur inclusiveness.

Download the full collection [here](#)

My entrepreneurial journey.... TINY LIBRARY



Julie Munneke



Business Name
Tiny Library <https://tinylibrary.nl/>



Place
Netherlands



Year started as entrepreneur
2019



Number of employees
8



What is your highest level of education?
University

After 8 years at Ahold Delhaize I started Tiny Library as I was blown away by the amount of stuff you need during and after pregnancy. With Tiny Library we offer baby products as service, with a focus on high quality and curated offers.

My targets are

1. To share my knowledge in a more educational or political role.
2. To show a practical example of the circular economy
3. To work with the whole chain and grow into international markets

My Challenges are

The full-time job and responsibilities that come with entrepreneurship are hard to manage sometimes, having three kids running around and balancing work and life. Something which is harder when you don't have a manager to compare yourself to and share doubts or struggles with.

This is what characterises me

1. Responsible
2. Analytical
3. Mission driven

The brands that inspire me



My motto is:
There are always multiple
ways to reach a goal

Which networks are you integrated in?

Impact Hub Amsterdam, Social Enterprise NL, Knappe Koppen, Fashion United

My advice(s) to girls and women who want to realise their dreams:

“Organise your business in such a way that it serves you, instead of working for the business.”

When I'm not working:

Sports, walks, meditation



www. werinproject .eu



My entrepreneurial journey....



Julia Kümper



Business Name
Match-Watch and Ventreneurs <https://ventreneurs.de/>



Place
Ibbenbüren, Germany



Year started as entrepreneur
2015



Number of employees
4



What is your highest level of education?
Masters

A rollercoaster, pushing being a sidepreneur to becoming a full-time entrepreneur.

My targets are

1. I want freedom and equality for all people.
2. It's fine to choose your own entrepreneurial way
3. My goal is to reduce barriers to diversify a startup, the Venture Capital ecosystem and our society.

My Challenges are

Work-Family compatibility

Educating people to become aware of biases & diversity benefits

This is what characterises me

1. Sense of Justice
2. Visionary
3. Empathic

Brands that inspire me



Role models that inspire me:

Stephanie Shirley
Rebecca Solnit
Soraya Chemaly

Which networks are you integrated in?

Women in VC
SEND e.V.

Zebbras Unite
InnovatorsRoom
RWTH Aachen Alumni

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

1. Trust yourself
2. You are worth it
3. It's ok to go your own way

When I'm not working:

Gardening

My motto is:
If there is no solution, I will create one



www.werinproject.eu



My entrepreneurial journey.... THE NEXT CLOSET

The first time Thalita and I worked together, we set up a car rally for professionals that make the world a better place from the job they are in. With an unbelievable amount of support, we were able to transform the foundation into a business. From there, we were involved in multiple sustainable business before we eventually put our experience together into The Next Closet.

The Next Closet is an online platform for secondhand clothing with a focus on delivering the EU market.

My targets are

1. To embrace diversity on the workflow.
2. To show the importance of sharing knowledge
3. To build strong partnerships within the fashion industry

My Challenges are

Balancing growth with a sustainable business model

This is what characterises me

1. Enthusiasm
2. Learn by doing

The brands that inspire me



The role models that inspire me:

Click to type

Which networks are you integrated in?

- The Next Women
- Scale up nation
- Techleap
- Female founders WhatsApp group

My advice(s) to girls and women who want to realise their dreams:

Find like minded people and passionate entrepreneurs, it is great to share experiences and learn from others.

Lieke Pijpers



Business Name
The Next Closet <https://thenextcloset.com/>



Place
Netherlands



Year started as entrepreneur
2013



Number of employees
20



What is your highest level of education?
University

My motto is:
Just do it!



www. werinproject .eu

Contributions from our partners



The Code To Change: Empowering Marginalised Groups Through Technology

Author: Daily van Dijk, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences

The Code To Change is an organisation based in the Netherlands dedicated to reducing inequality by empowering marginalised groups with the necessary professional skills. At the heart of this organisation is Iffat Rose Gill, an international trailblazing social entrepreneur, activist, and the founder of "[The Code To Change](#)". Their mission is to level the playing field and provide opportunities for those facing disadvantages within the employment market.

Iffat foresaw the disadvantages women would face in the future during the rise and embedment of technological advances without proper guidance and an educational stepping stone. After growing up in Malta, she moved with her family to her family's native country in Pakistan. There, she was stopped by a girl of a similar age, confined to her house, who took up the courage one day to ask Iffat where she was going every single day, confronting her with the realisation that not every girl and woman was raised with the privilege of education. She responded, isn't it obvious you're just going to end up cooking for your in-laws? You know you're going to get married off to someone as is local culture. Why do you need a university degree for that? That was hugely emotionally overwhelming, and I did not know how to start to unpack that," said Iffat while explaining where her entrepreneurial journey started.



“How unfair is it, that they don't get the same chances”

After the guidance and financial support of her father, Iffat started her first skills centre, at the age of 18, for young girls in the neighbourhood, driven to make a change and offer the support that no one else gave outside of the cultural and societal norm. “Because in a way, I felt responsible, like how can I have all this privilege? Why? Whereas these young girls and I always say this, they're probably even more intelligent than I am. They're really smart. How unfair is it, that they don't get the same chances”. Her centre became an influx of women eager to learn, develop and connect with other markets using the Internet. With the pervasiveness of the Internet in everyday working life, courses for other skills became apparent, computer skills and the tools to learn and use these with.

The Code To Change: Empowering Marginalised Groups Through Technology

“Between 2001 and 2004, people began realising the potential of connecting to markets in other countries through the Internet. If we could give them access, they could cut out the middleman. They can select and sell directly to those markets. So that's how the Internet got involved. At the same time, we would need to teach them how to use the technology.” Iffat’s centre developed into a safe technological centre for women to use the Internet and turn it to their advantage. Recognising the lack of access to technology and learning opportunities enabled them not only to improve their job prospects and economic position but also to close the technological gap that could otherwise perpetuate their disadvantage in the future.

Addressing inequality in the Dutch job market

In the Netherlands, Iffat discovered that Dutch women were facing a similar problem, despite educational freedom. They face discrimination after stepping out of their professional environment for a longer period due to a variety of reasons, giving birth to and raising a child being a frequent reason. “You have a gap in your CV, that's the worst thing ever. These women were made redundant because they could not upgrade their skills. They would not even look at these women who were functional members of the workforce before. Recruiters at the time were completely biased about this”, Iffat says that women approached her to ask her to teach

them these tech skills. Iffat experienced similar discrimination by recruiters as a non-white woman and had a gap in her CV due to raising her children, despite her impressive career and has spoken twice at UN platforms. It triggered Iffat to start yet again a centre to make a social change that should be evidently minimised or even non-existent. That centre is The Code To Change and quickly grew from a start-up to a company. “Before it became a full-fledged organisation, we would teach them the right digital skills to build a website almost like a hack a phone, you know let's build a website in three days. This would give them that huge boost of confidence that they needed because if they can do this, you know they felt like they could do anything in the world”. The Code To Change offers technological training, courses, and mentorship programs designed to bridge the gap between marginalised groups and the employment market. By enhancing the professional abilities of marginalised job seekers, the organisation aims to strengthen participants’ positions in the job market resulting in more economic freedom.

Diamonds in the rough

Many (marginalised) women are individuals who either lack opportunities elsewhere or feel ineligible to apply due to various factors, despite having the determination to do something. Financial constraints have further limited their options. However, The Code To Change distinguishes itself by not burdening participants with exorbitant fees.

The Code To Change: Empowering Marginalised Groups Through Technology

Through subsidies and sponsorships, the academy ensures that financial obstacles do not hinder access to its programs. Their primary focus remains on empowering predominantly women and other underrepresented genders, including individuals from refugee and migrant backgrounds. The response from participants at The Code To Change is inspiring. Such as those who come from underprivileged backgrounds often approach The Code To Change, displaying an unwavering motivation to learn and succeed. Their resilience and determination demonstrate the transformative power of education and access to job opportunities. "I don't have a laptop but want to do this course. Because it will give me access to this job. My God, I read those stories from our applicants every day. You can't find that kind of motivation anywhere else", shares Iffat about one of her participants.

Expanding across borders

So far, The Code To Exchange has implemented its beacon of equality in eight countries and partnerships with eight organisations across Europe. It differentiates itself from companies that undertake action with a white savior complex, by listening to the needs of marginalised groups and offering opportunities to develop and guide them, instead of deeming them unqualified.

Visit www.codetochange.org



Iffat Rose Gill, Founder and CEO at The Code To Change

Finding My Entrepreneurial Identity: From the Candy Brand to WeRin

Author: Maynara de Almeida Furquim, Münster University of Applied Sciences



Starting your own business and becoming an entrepreneur can sometimes be a dream, a family heritage, a career choice, or even a completely unexpected event in life. In my case, it was a bit of everything, and I want to share how I ended up at WeRin and my experience with entrepreneurship.

My name is Maynara, and I support the WeRin project through the FH Münster University of Applied Sciences, in Germany. I am originally from Brazil but came to Germany to study and build on my career. I always dreamt of becoming the owner of my own business, but in my “life plan” that would be later, after I had had my successful career in the industry – I didn’t see entrepreneurship as a career option back then.

However, my entrepreneurial path began in

2017, even though I didn’t see it like that. I was finishing my bachelor’s studies in Brazil when my cousin and I decided to start a gourmet-candy brand. Our family had always said that we should try something with candies. And somehow, right before I defended my bachelor thesis, we did it. We kept it only online, selling via Instagram and to close friends. I continued studying and working, with the candy brand in parallel, and my cousin decided to open her own business, in 2019 – not related to candies.

A few months after she did it, my family, unexpectedly, got the opportunity to acquire a candy store next to my cousin’s store, and, as I had the candy brand, I thought: why not? My mom and dad would have their dream of a cafeteria and benefit from it. While all of that was happening, life gave me the chance to go to Germany to study. I took it without even thinking twice and not knowing what was ahead. But I was still involved in the candy brand (now selling in my mom’s store) and helping with the new store. So, I went to Germany and ran the businesses in Brazil in parallel with my studies.

Yet, in 2020, I still was not seeing any of this as entrepreneurship. I was just caught in the moment and involved in others’ decisions. So, I “hugged the opportunity” and just found a way to do it.

Finding My Entrepreneurial Identity: From the Candy Brand to WeRin

Then, the pandemic came, and we all know how hard it was for everyone, especially small businesses. I finished my studies in Germany (online) and went back to Brazil. We did the best we could to go through this tough period, thinking outside the box as much as possible to get (new) customers' attention. We learned a lot during that time, even though we wanted to give up sometimes – resilience was a key element for us.

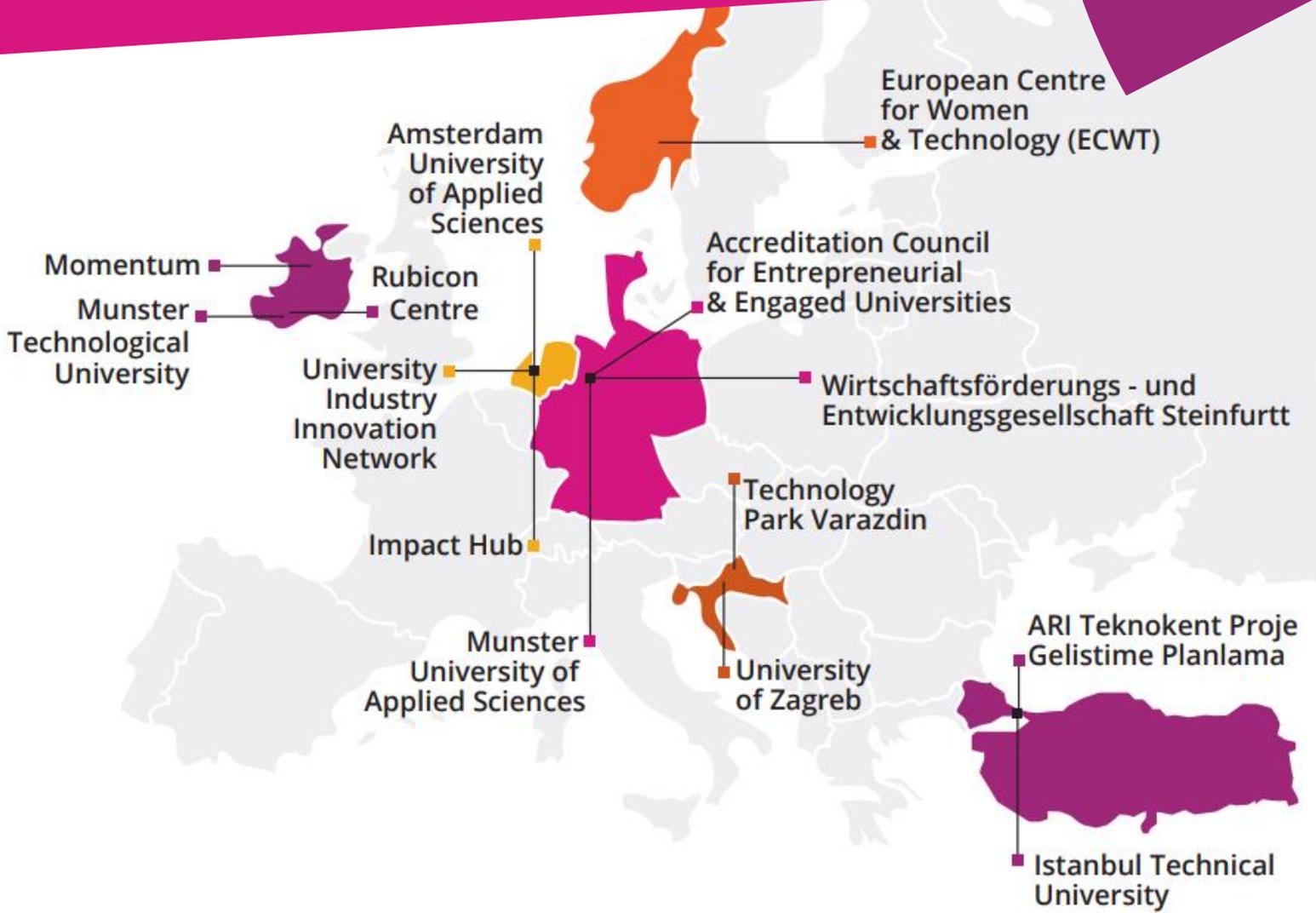
In 2021, I decided to go back to Germany to pursue my dream of an international career. My professional career was not going as I expected in Brazil, I was frustrated, and I needed a change – note: not for one second, I thought of focusing on the family business or investing more in my candy brand. Then, here, I needed to choose: my dream abroad or the partnership with my cousin. I gave the last one up – and it hurt me. But I was still helping my mom with her store, and we even opened a second one!

Then 2022 came. This was the year I got involved with the Science-to-Business Marketing Research Centre, a part of FH Münster, and the WeRin project. This was the year I heard and saw entrepreneurship as it really is. This was the year I saw myself, for the first time, as an entrepreneur – even though it was a bit weird in the beginning. This was the year I chose to continue pursuing my international career in Germany, but also make my family business thrive in Brazil and be proud of being an entrepreneur.

Why did I just share with you this big (personal) story? Because I had to come to another country to realize and understand

that what I was living in my home country was indeed a career, and that I could have pursued it. I had contact with entrepreneurship only once in my whole university experience in Brazil – and it was bad, everyone hated that course.

Only when I got involved in WeRin, met so many inspiring people, and participated in events, I understood the entrepreneurial path that I have been walking. It makes me want to work towards bringing more awareness to entrepreneurship as a career path, especially for women, and in my home country. Thank you, WeRin! There is more to come.



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.



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WeRin

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