

# WIN

## Improving the position of Women in the labour markets of peripheral Industrial regions

### FIRST WIN NEWSLETTER



## PROJECT UPDATE

We are thrilled to introduce the WIN project, an ambitious initiative designed to address and overcome the challenges faced by women in peripheral industrial regions across Danube region. The WIN project brings together a diverse consortium of ten dedicated partners, each contributing unique expertise and resources to tackle critical issues related to gender equality, economic participation, and regional development.

### Our aim and goals

The WIN project aims to create **sustainable opportunities** for women in underserved regions. Our key goals include empowering women through **skills development** and **entrepreneurship**, tackling socio-economic barriers, and promoting gender equality in economic transformation.

### Challenges we are tackling

WIN addresses **economic disparities** caused by industrial decline, skill gaps that limit women's access to job markets, and **social barriers** restricting their full workforce

participation.

## Contributions and impact

Our partners are committed to make tangible impact through **research, training, and advocacy**. We aim to **build capacity, improve employability, and foster collaboration** to ensure women are integrated into evolving labor markets.

[READ MORE](#)

## First in-person partner meeting in Ljubljana

On February 28, the first in-person partner meeting for the WIN project was held in the Atrium of the lead partner ZRC SAZU in Ljubljana. This kick-off meeting brought together all project partners to review activities and determine the next steps. The partners reaffirmed their commitment to improving the position of women in peripheral industrial regions, working towards a **more accessible, inclusive, and efficient labor market for women**. It was a productive start to the collaborative effort, setting the foundation for the project's future work.





## Study visit in Trbovlje

The day after the meeting, partners embarked on a study visit to one of the project's pilot regions, Trbovlje. The visit began with presentations by **Deputy Mayor Vesna Jesih** and **museum curator Gregor Jerman**, who shared insights into the history of women's employment and the challenges women face in the local labor market. The visit continued with a tour of **Katapult**, a support hub for entrepreneurs, where project manager Olga Knez introduced the partners to the company Dewesoft and showcased the training programs they offer.



The second part of the visit featured a roundtable discussion '*Strengthening the Employment of Women in the Municipality of Trbovlje.*' Several key figures from the local community participated, including **Deputy Mayor Vesna Jesih**, who shared the municipality's approach to addressing women's employment issues: "*We identified the problem early and are now focused on creating pathways for women to thrive in the workforce.*" **Youth worker Tjaša Golob** from the Trbovlje Youth and Sports Institute presented programs aimed at promoting employment opportunities for young women in the area, while young entrepreneur **Stella Čebin** shared her inspiring story of establishing her own business in Trbovlje, noting, "*with determination and support, women can succeed in business and become role models for others in the*

community.” **Tjaša Polc**, director of the **Zasavska Chamber of Commerce**, emphasized the importance of encouraging women to take on leadership roles, stating, “*We must empower women to seek higher positions and provide them with the necessary tools and support.*” Finally, **Vilma Strniša**, director of the **Employment Institute of the Republic of Slovenia in Trbovlje**, outlined the employment programs in place to assist women in finding jobs and building careers.





## PROJECT TEAM SPOTLIGHT

We're excited to introduce the ten key partners collaborating on the WIN project. Each partner brings unique expertise and a commitment to addressing the challenges faced by Women in peripheral INdustrial regions. From cutting-edge research to impactful social programs, these organizations are working together to empower women and drive positive change. Discover how their contributions will help shape the success of the WIN project.

### Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts - ZRC SAZU

**ZRC SAZU** is a leading Slovenian research institution focused on geography, regional development, and social issues. ZRC SAZU is the lead partner of the WIN project and coordinates research efforts on women's employment in peripheral industrial regions.

[READ MORE](#)

### Association for Culture and Education PiNA

PiNA is a Slovenian NGO fostering social innovation, capacity building, and inclusive societies. PiNA leads the communication activities of the WIN project and contributes its expertise in gender equality and awareness-raising campaigns.

[READ MORE](#)

### University of Graz - UniGRAZ

**The University of Graz** is a large Austrian university with expertise in urban and regional development. In the project UniGRAZ focuses on the socio-economic transformation of industrial regions and will contribute its research on gender equality in local labour markets.

[READ MORE](#)

## Registered association Styrian Iron Road - VESTE

**VESTE** is a regional development agency in Austria focused on industrial culture and regional revitalization. VESTE coordinates stakeholder engagement and promotes the transformation of industrial regions through its experience with regional initiatives.

[READ MORE](#)

## LAG Sokolovsko - MASS

**MASS** is a Czech regional authority experienced in post-industrial challenges and networking in peripheral areas. In the project MASS will provide expertise in strategic planning, data analysis, and support the development of new employment opportunities for women.

[READ MORE](#)

## Central Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency Nonprofit Ltd. - CTRIA

**CTRIA** is a Hungarian innovation agency supporting social innovation and economic transition. CTRIA brings expertise in women's employment and entrepreneurship support, particularly in green economy and social innovation sectors.

[READ MORE](#)

## Ministry of Economy Affairs of Hercegbosnian Canton - MGK10

**MGK10** is a governmental body in Bosnia and Herzegovina responsible for various sectors, including industry and entrepreneurship. MGK10 will contribute to the WIN project by offering its expertise in policy-making and regional development.

[READ MORE](#)

## Employment Office of HercegBosnian Canton - ZZUP HBZ

**ZZUP HBZ** is a public institution responsible for employment mediation and social security in Bosnia and Herzegovina. ZZUP HBZ will focus on the professional training and employment inclusion of women in peripheral regions.

[READ MORE](#)

## Association of Business Women in Serbia - ABW

**ABW** is a Serbian NGO supporting women's entrepreneurship and employment in various sectors, including agriculture. ABW will use its experience to empower women in post-industrial regions and foster entrepreneurship.

[READ MORE](#)

## National Management School - NMS

**NMS** is a Bulgarian organization focused on youth employment skills and social innovation. In the project NMS will develop social innovation methodologies and contribute to the project's training and capacity-building efforts for women in peripheral regions.

[READ MORE](#)



# CALL TO ACTION

**D.1.1.1 Input paper on the position of women in the  
labour markets of peripheral industrial regions**



Women in peripheral industrial regions face significant barriers on the labour markets of more peripheral, industrial regions. *These barriers include traditional gender roles, limiting access to higher-paying jobs and reinforcing unpaid care work responsibilities.* The input paper maps out the general, sector-related and place-specific challenges of women in industrial work environments. Moreover, it emphasizes the need for **empowerment strategies** that extend beyond the workplace, **addressing cultural and institutional factors** that hinder women's fulfilment of their potential. Strategies should also **address women's self-views** and **their role within the community**. While enhancing women's 'hard' skills is vital, it is equally important to foster 'soft' aspects such as networking, promoting role models, and collective initiatives. Such initiatives do not only support women in their personal growth but also help to **reshape local economies** by fostering self-esteem and a sense of belonging. To address these challenges, gender mainstreaming policies and implementing targeted actions in local contexts are vital, **increase women's participation in higher-paying sectors** such as STEM and tackle the barriers of unpaid care work. Without these efforts, the untapped creative potential of the female labour force inevitably leads to a further marginalization of peripheral industrial regions and intensification of the core- periphery divide in all countries of the Danube region.

The input paper was prepared by the **University Graz** with the support of all project partners.

For more information access the full input paper [HERE](#).

### **D.1.3.1 Analysis of local/regional/national employment policies addressing women**

The '*Analysis of local/regional/national employment policies addressing women*' (DT.1.3.1) document encompasses a detailed overview of policy frameworks and interventions at different spatial levels *to identify and present cultural and institutional enablers and barriers that prevent women from participating in the labour markets of peripheral industrial regions.* It highlights an implementation gap between different policy levels: While broad policies addressing women's employment and related needs exist at the European and national level, tailor-made policies at the local level are difficult to find. *Existing national initiatives are very often not well known on the regional level, while national institutions are unaware of local initiatives.* Overall, the insufficient cooperation between national institutions and regional actors, as well as between **different institutional levels, results in low awareness, and inadequate support for women seeking to enter in the labour markets of peripheral industrial regions.**

Partners **MASS** and **UniGRAZ** were responsible for leading the process with all other project partners contributing.

### D.2.1.1 Guidelines for developing social innovations

As part of our ongoing efforts to improve labour market access for women in peripheral industrial regions, we are proud to announce the completion of a WIN key deliverable: Guidelines for Developing Social Innovations, which represent a crucial milestone in the WIN project. The Guidelines facilitate the creation of WIN Innovation groups in each pilot region of the project and provide a methodology for designing meaningful solutions to address pressing issues related to women's employment, taking into account the unique conditions in every region.

Each WIN Innovation group represents various stakeholders, including target groups and local leaders from the respective pilot regions. These groups will guide the innovation process, identifying both challenges and opportunities for women in their respective regions. Two stages of the innovation process are already underway:

- **Feeling the change** - This stage involves gathering and analysing data with direct input from target groups. Engaging with women in these regions will allow us to frame the specific challenges they face, ensuring the solutions we develop are deeply rooted in their lived experiences.
- **Shaping solutions** - In this stage, the WIN Innovation groups focus on developing and testing new ideas to address the identified challenges. Stakeholder engagement ensures these ideas are practical, innovative, and relevant to the local context.

### WIN Project at the RSA Conference 2024: Exploring Women's Employment in Industrial Peripheries

Collaborators from the WIN project recently participated in the prestigious **Regional Studies Association (RSA) Conference** in Dubrovnik, held from 11th to 13th September 2024. The conference featured a special session, "*Local labour markets between deindustrialisation and reindustrialisation?*", which focused on the future of work in the industrial peripheries of Central and Eastern Europe.

During the session, **Jani Kozina** from ZRC SAZU presented key insights on the challenges and opportunities for women in local labor markets in peripheral industrial regions. Additionally, **Katarina Polajnar Horvat** highlighted lessons from Trbovlje's women's factories in her talk on just transition, while **Jasmin Sandriester** explored the

role of women in male-dominated sectors. These presentations sparked valuable discussions on gender equality and the future of work in the region.

[READ MORE](#)



## Innovation groups launched across all pilot regions!

We are thrilled to announce the launch of **WIN Innovation Groups** across all pilot regions! These groups are central to developing innovative solutions to improve the position of women in peripheral industrial regions. The Innovation Groups will work to identify the challenges women face in local labor markets and contribute to regional and local strategies. Their work focuses on diversifying local economies, promoting sustainable industries, and creating job opportunities in green transition sectors.

Each of the 7 WIN Innovation Groups will co-develop at least 3 social innovation ideas per region, with at least one being tested. These groups will be essential in driving co-creation processes and implementing the envisioned social innovations. More details on this exciting progress will be shared in December, so stay tuned!

### Curious to learn more about the progress of the WIN project?

Stay updated with the latest news and insights, where we share important milestones, project developments, and key activities. Dive into our most recent updates and

discover how we're working towards improving the position of women in peripheral industrial regions!

**Interreg  
Danube Region**



Co-funded by  
the European Union

WIN

This project is supported by the Interreg Danube Region Programme project co-funded by the European Union



WIN

[Unsubscribe](#)

