

WIN

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

FINAL NEWSLETTER

Closing chapter, lasting impact



AWARENESS RAISING CAMPAIGN

From awareness to action — across seven regions

The WIN awareness-raising campaign was designed not only to raise awareness, but to actively respond to the real challenges women face in peripheral industrial regions: limited visibility in the labour market, few direct connections to employers, and insufficient spaces for learning and confidence-building.

Across seven regions in the Danube area, the campaign grew into something much bigger than communication — activating a whole ecosystem of women, employers, institutions, and communities.

Key figures:

- **23 events** organised across all pilot regions
- **5,200+** participants engaged
- **over 4,000 women** directly reached
- **155 employers** engaged
- **161 job applications** submitted (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- **400,000+ people** reached in total through digital channels, media, and events
- **50+ media features** across radio, online platforms, and print

Approaches varied across regions: from employment fairs and direct job connections in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, to joining existing job fairs reaching 1,700+ participants in the **Czech Republic**, public exhibitions and theatre in **Austria**, a podcast reaching 223,000 views in **Hungary**, career days and a hackathon for young women entrepreneurs in **Slovenia**, and lasting community spaces for women in **Serbia** and **Bulgaria**. In each case, the most impactful activities were interactive, practical, and connected to real opportunities.

The key lesson: awareness only becomes meaningful when people can experience it — through direct contact, real examples, and a sense of belonging.

FINAL CONFERENCE

WIN final conference — Oroszlány, 6 May 2026



How do we create more inclusive, equitable, and supportive opportunities for women in industrial regions? This was the question that connected us throughout the WIN project — and it was also at the heart of our final conference, held on 6 May 2026 at the Oroszlány Mining Museum in Hungary. A venue that could not have been more fitting: a place shaped by industrial history, now hosting a conversation about the future of women in exactly these kinds of regions.

Together with partners, we reflected on the challenges women still face, but also on the solutions, practices, and connections that are already contributing to the change we need. The morning opened with a keynote session titled *"Beyond good intentions"*, where **Dr. Erika Nagy** (geographer, ELTE Centre for Economic and Regional Studies), **Melinda Topolcsik** (managing director & plant manager, Bridgestone Tatabánya) and **Dr. Erika Bálint** (chairwoman, Association of Hungarian Women in Science) each offered their perspective on what actually shapes women's opportunities — structurally, scientifically, and from the corporate floor. The conversation that followed was honest and direct: *who really blocks women's labour market opportunities, and who has the power to change that?*

The afternoon shifted into action, with participants rotating through three workshop labs exploring **institutional barriers**, **social innovation approaches**, and the **capacities needed for lasting change**. We closed the day with a guided tour of the Mining Museum — a reminder of how deeply industrial history continues to shape life and work in these regions — and a dinner at the Hilltop Winery in Neszmély, a moment to connect and celebrate what the partnership built together.

The WIN final conference was not simply a presentation of results — it was an opportunity to reflect on how much collaboration, dialogue, and shared commitment matter when working towards a more inclusive labour market for women. Thank you to all partners, speakers, and participants who were part of this journey.



PROJECT UPDATE

PROJECT OUTPUTS

Knowledge built to last

Over the course of the project, the WIN partnership produced two major publications that together document both the methodology and the outcomes of social innovation across seven pilot regions. Both are freely available on the project website.

Methodological Toolkit — Developing, testing and reflecting on social innovations

Social innovation rarely begins with a perfect plan. It begins with listening, learning, and the courage to try. **The WIN Methodological Toolkit** captures exactly this journey — from the first conversations with local communities to piloting ideas in the real world and reflecting on what worked and why.

Built on 2.5 years of transnational collaboration across seven pilot regions, the toolkit offers **practical steps, flexible tools, and real-life examples** that others

can adapt to their own context. It is written for practitioners, municipalities, NGOs, employers, and anyone who believes that meaningful change is possible — even under real constraints.

Available in all partner languages

Social Innovation Booklet — From ideas to pilots and practice

If the Toolkit shows you how to build the process, this Booklet shows you what that process can produce. Across seven countries, WIN Innovation Groups co-developed **26 social innovation ideas** and **tested 13 of them in real communities** — working with real women, real employers, and real constraints.

The Booklet tells these regional stories honestly: *what was tried, what worked, what could be stronger, and what others can build on*. It is a practical resource for anyone working in employment services, municipal administration, education, NGOs, or regional development who wants concrete examples rather than abstract advice.

Available [HERE](#)

WIN at a glance:

- **7 pilot regions** across the Danube area.
- **26 social innovation ideas** co-developed.
- **13 innovations** piloted and tested.
- **48 Innovation Group members** and external stakeholders reflected through interviews and focus groups.

WIN GAME

Sociopoly — play to understand

WIN LIKE A WOMAN! is a collaborative-competitive board game developed within the transnational project *WIN – Improving the position of Women in the labour markets of peripheral INdustrial regions*. The game was created to raise awareness of the specific challenges women continue to face in the labour

market and in the workplace, particularly in traditionally male-dominated and peripheral industrial regions across the Danube Region.

Players progress along the **“Ladder of Success”**, representing career advancement, while encountering concepts grounded in real-life experiences. These include the glass ceiling, symbolising invisible systemic barriers to advancement; **the mental load, reflecting the hidden emotional and cognitive burden often carried by women**; and the pay gap bridge, a collective challenge that highlights the need for shared responsibility in achieving gender equality.

Through challenge cards based on realistic workplace situations, players are invited to **propose solutions, exchange perspectives, and collectively reflect on how inequalities can be addressed**. Importantly, there are no wrong answers – the game is designed to open dialogue and inspire collaborative problem-solving rather than competition alone.

Although players strive for individual progress, **victory is only possible through cooperation**. The game emphasises that gender equality cannot be achieved individually, but requires solidarity, mutual support, and collective action. In WIN LIKE A WOMAN!, no one truly wins unless everyone moves forward together.

The game was developed as part of the WIN project, implemented by partners from across the Danube Region and supported by the Interreg Danube Region Programme, co-financed by the European Union. **The game is available in English, Slovenian, Czech, Bulgarian, Croatian, Bosnian and Serbian language.**



PROJECT WEBSITE

A living archive — visit us after the project ends

The WIN project website was never just a communication tool. Throughout the project, it grew into a living library — **a space where anyone can explore the full story of WIN:** its activities, results, resources, and the people behind it.

With around 50 published articles covering everything from campaign updates and partner contributions to women's personal stories from across the Danube region, the site offers both depth and breadth. All project deliverables remain freely accessible — *from the Methodological Toolkit and Social Innovation Booklet to conference materials, activity reports, and in-depth articles on the themes that matter most.*

Whether you are a researcher, practitioner, policymaker, or simply curious about what the project achieved — the website is your starting point.

[VISIT US HERE](#)

Coming soon — Policy outputs

As the project reaches its final stage, the WIN partnership is completing a set of policy outputs that will be published before the official project closure:

- D3.2.1: Local and regional action plans
- D3.2.2: Policy recommendations to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region
- D3.2.3: Policy briefs

Stay tuned — these will be available on the project website shortly.



PROJECT TEAM SPOTLIGHT

As the WIN project draws to a close, we invited our partners to share their reflections on the journey — what they take away, what surprised them, and what they believe will last beyond the project itself.

PARTNERS' REFLECTIONS

Looking back — voices from our partners

"The WIN awareness-raising campaign demonstrated that carefully planned and well-orchestrated soft measures can influence perceptions within smaller local communities."

- **Jani Kozina**, Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Slovenia

"One of the key strengths of the campaign was the integration of WIN activities into existing national and international platforms, which significantly extended the project's reach and ensured continuity of visibility. Particularly successful were the local-level activities in Loznica, which enabled direct engagement with beneficiaries."

- **Ivana Petrović**, Association of Business Women in Serbia, Serbia

"From my perspective, the campaign clearly showed that while digital tools like our podcast and social media activities are effective in reaching wide audiences, real impact happens through personal interaction. The face-to-face events we organised created a level of openness and engagement that online formats simply cannot achieve."

- **István Hegedűs**, Central Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency Nonprofit Ltd., Hungary

"Working on the WIN project was my first experience collaborating in such a large international partnership. It taught me responsibility, teamwork, and the importance of working towards shared goals. What I value most is that, together, we achieved meaningful results across countries and made an impact in the regions involved, especially by encouraging people to reflect on issues they may not have considered before."

- **Marko Senčar**, Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Slovenia

"The WIN project has been much more than a series of activities and events. It created a space for meaningful conversations about gender equality, equal pay, and the challenges women continue to face in the labour market. We were especially encouraged by the strong engagement of young people and women who openly reflected on their future opportunities, ambitions, and self-confidence. The project also showed us how powerful personal interaction and local community-based activities can be in creating real impact. At the same time, we had the opportunity to meet many inspiring women, some of whom have

become not only important professional contacts, but also friends. We take away valuable experience, new partnerships, and strong motivation to continue addressing these topics beyond the project's duration."

- **Eva Korfová**, LAG Sokolovsko, Czech Republic

"For us, the WIN project became much more than an international cooperation initiative. Over the past two and a half years, it created meaningful opportunities to work closely with women from peripheral regions, listen to their realities, and support them in transforming ideas, skills, and personal strengths into visible initiatives and community action. One of the most important achievements of the project was the creation of spaces and processes that encouraged women to connect, collaborate, and gain confidence in their abilities. Beyond the methodologies and pilot activities, we believe the true legacy of WIN lies in the communities, networks, and sense of empowerment that will continue long after the project ends. What we take away from this experience is a deeper understanding of how important trust, participation, and locally grounded approaches are for sustainable social innovation. As an organisation, WIN strengthened our commitment to creating human-centred educational and entrepreneurial initiatives. On a personal level, the project reminded us that even small supportive actions and spaces can lead to meaningful long-term change in people's lives."

- **Iana Avramova**, National Management School, Bulgaria

"The WIN project has been a very valuable and inspiring experience. It provided an excellent opportunity to exchange knowledge and good practices with partners from different European countries and to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to women's participation in the labour market. We consider the most important achievement of the project to be the development of practical recommendations and innovative approaches that can contribute to improving employment opportunities and entrepreneurial support for women, particularly in rural and less developed areas. From this experience, we take with us new knowledge, strong partnerships, and a shared commitment to continue promoting gender equality and empowering women through future initiatives and policies."

- **Jovanka Runic**, Ministry of Economy of Canton 10, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"I am convinced that the work of the WIN project is both useful and achievable through the involvement of the local community. It was very important that local institutions and associations took part in the workshops and became more aware of the challenges related to youth employment. As a result, they also joined the pilot action during the Career Exploration Day (Job Happens). As one of the co-organisers, I strongly believe that success is possible when awareness-raising is

connected with concrete forms of cooperation. Trbovlje has proven that it can be done!"

- **Primož Gašperič**, Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Slovenia

"The WIN project has been a genuinely inspiring experience — it showed us that even in a region with deep industrial roots and long-established traditions, there is real openness to rethinking the role of women in the workplace, once the right spaces for conversation are created. Our most important achievement, I believe, is the Social Innovation Group itself: bringing together regional companies and stakeholders to exchange ideas and co-create solutions on this topic was a first for the Styrian Iron Road — and that alone feels like a lasting legacy. What particularly moved us was the overwhelming response to our Role Model Campaign; the women who stepped forward as role models showed tremendous courage, and the warmth and recognition they received from the public confirmed that this conversation was long overdue. The travelling exhibition, the creativity competition with its wonderfully visible result — a bus carrying our message across the region for a full year — and the theatre premiere "The only one in the room" all remind us that culture and creativity can open doors that formal programmes sometimes cannot. What we take away is a deeper conviction that sustainable change in industrial regions requires patience, trust-building, and the courage to try unconventional formats — and a network of people who share that belief."

- **Gerfried Tiffner**, Registered association Styrian Iron Road, Austria

"The WIN project has been a valuable opportunity for the project team at the University of Graz to contribute academic expertise to a collaborative initiative dedicated to improving opportunities for women in employment. We see one of the project's most important legacies in its ability to successfully combine applied research, awareness-raising, and hands-on engagement to support more inclusive and responsive labour market approaches. Through the co-creation with European partners and regional stakeholders, the project has fostered meaningful dialogue and developed approaches that can continue to support social innovation beyond the project's lifetime, while responding to the practical needs of women across the pilot regions. As a project team, we take away new insights into inclusive policy and practice, inspiration for future interdisciplinary and socially engaged initiatives, and lasting memories of a strong partnership committed to creating real and meaningful change."

- **Jörn Harfst**, University of Graz, Austria

"The WIN project has meant much more to me than completing activities and achieving planned results. What I will remember most are the people behind the

project, the openness within the partnership and the feeling that we were learning and growing together, even though we came from very different regions and contexts. I believe its most important legacy is the collaboration it has created, both across countries and within our own region, because it gave us the confidence to turn shared ideas into meaningful local action. I take away valuable knowledge, genuine professional relationships and the belief that change is possible when people and institutions truly work together."

- **Janja Rimac**, Employment Office of the Herceg-Bosnian County, Bosnia and Herzegovina

***Thank you for being part of
the WIN journey.***

**Interreg
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WIN

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