



## Women entrepreneurs from six countries spent an empowering week of networking in the beautiful Highlands of Scotland



*Supporting and maintaining vibrant economies in remote, rural communities is a common challenge across northern Europe. Although outmigration of young people is beginning to slow in some parts of the region, still many young people are beginning to slow in some parts of the region, still many young people leave the sparsely populated regions where they were born for centres of population with greater employment opportunities. Poor communications, logistical challenges and lack of business infrastructure often make such areas less attractive for incoming businesses too.*

*Encouragingly though, self-employment and entrepreneurship in remote, rural regions is on the increase. Creating successful business in the remote north offers the opportunity not just for rewarding work, but also a means of building and being part of the success of one's local community.*

*The W-Power project was set up specifically to support women in remote, rural, sparsely populated areas to set up and grow businesses. Women often face additional challenges to starting and growing their own enterprise. The W-Power project helps by identifying business potential, developing expertise, improving advisory services and providing national and international networking opportunities for business development.*



As part of the W-Power project female entrepreneurs from six northern European countries spent a week together in the beautiful Highlands of Scotland in June 2019, participating in a programme of networking, learning and upskilling. The week-long event provided an opportunity to share contacts and business stories, and to gain insights into the nuts and bolts of running a business in the Highlands through a series of business study visits.

The June meeting followed on from a survey of almost 200 female entrepreneurs conducted by the project which explored challenges and opportunities arising for women from running their businesses in sparsely populated areas. Data was gathered from across the six partner areas, as well as in New Brunswick in Canada, as associate partner to the project.

The results of the survey show many similarities between the participating regions in terms of the challenges and opportunities for female entrepreneurship. For example, starting your own business is seen by women as a means of gaining more control over their work and goals, as well as helping to achieve a better work-life balance. Many women also describe their business endeavours as an expression of their strong commitment to their community and a desire to help keep it vibrant and successful.

Challenges faced by female entrepreneurs in sparsely populated regions are considerable and include finding customers and low footfall; access to finance; lack of support for start-ups; and challenges with credibility and breaking into networks predominantly run by men.

Remote location can sometimes be transformed from a challenge into an opportunity however. A remote location may bring with it unique and sought after characteristics, or provide a source of products which with skill and imagination can be shaped into a successful business.

The W-Power survey also asked business women about their training and professional development needs. The skills which women are looking for support with ranged from marketing and budgeting through to cultivating larger networks and learning from female role models and mentors.



Coming up on W-Power!

### Apply now!

In June the W-Power project also kicked off another strand of its work – a gender-aware business innovation platform, making micro-finance available to innovative businesses with majority female involvement. The gender-aware innovation platform will use a 'pitching' model to select up to five businesses, who will then receive financial support and advice from the project.

<http://w-power.interreg-npa.eu/news/show/innovation-platform-for-new-pre-startups/>



## Women Entrepreneurs from the West of Ireland to take part in a 'Finding your Voice' Masterclass

One of the objectives of the W-Power project is to address specific training, up-skilling and capacity building needs affecting the female entrepreneurs and women looking to set up businesses in the sparsely populated areas.

To this end, a survey was conducted by WestBIC, the project partner based in the West of Ireland. Respondents have been asked to reflect whether women starting a business have different business support needs than men and in what areas such support would be needed. One of the main areas identified where specific intervention is required, was 'confidence building, communication and storytelling' - as many as 1 in 5 felt very strongly that this was a key area of need.

To address the perceived shortage in this skills area, WestBIC has teamed up with the EMPOWER programme - a Female Entrepreneur Programme targeted at female entrepreneurs from West of Ireland facilitated by the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology Innovation Hub (iHub), to launch a targeted Masterclass. The Masterclass 'Finding your Voice' focuses on the art of storytelling and communication and will take place on 24th September, as a part of the annual Mayo Ideas Week.

The Mayo Ideas Week, now celebrating its 10th anniversary, is a week-long series of idea generation, entrepreneurship and business events hosted by the development and enterprise support agencies and organisations in County Mayo, West of Ireland. Running every September, Mayo Ideas Week is a collaborative initiative, with more than 30 organisations and agencies co-hosting events over the years. WestBIC is delighted to have this opportunity to collaborate, network and raise the profile of the W-Power project during this high-profile event.

The Masterclass will guide the entrepreneurs on a journey to find, experience and explore the power of their unique authentic voice so that they can connect with the people they want to reach. The Masterclass will be facilitated by Padraig Hyland of The Core Story. Padraig is a specialist in business strategy & engagement and a thought leader in the evolution of authentic strategy and using story to evolve leadership and engage audiences. He has designed a framework, The Core Story Process™, to create authentic strategies that will engage and excite. It has been successfully applied in many global blue chip organisations such as Heineken, Smurfit Kappa, Xerox and Oracle.

The Masterclass has attracted an immediate positive reaction and was fully booked out within 4 days of going 'live'. Such was the demand that additional places have been added, signalling the value, but also the need for such targeted training and we are looking forward to sharing the outcomes and learning from this event with our project partners and wider stakeholders in the aftermath.



## W-Power peer-to-peer networking programme: A great opportunity!

The peer-to-peer networking programme is a transnational exchange programme between women entrepreneurs in sparsely populated regions. Each participant has the possibility to:

**VISIT** a peer women entrepreneur in another partner country

**HOST** a peer women entrepreneur from another partner country

**Come along to:**

**DEVELOP** new international business opportunities

**GET ACCESS** to new partners, new markets and networks

**LEARN** new ways of working, useful tools, problem-solving

**DISCUSS** everyday business issues with a peer entrepreneurs in a transnational context

More information on [www.w-powerproject.eu](http://www.w-powerproject.eu)



More information about the activities and the wider project can be found at: [www.w-powerproject.eu](http://www.w-powerproject.eu)

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