Empower. Network. Grow.

Empowering women entrepreneurs in sparsely populated communities

W-Power

Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2014–2020

EUROPEAN UNION
Investing in your future
European Regional Development Fund

W-Power - Empowering Women Entrepreneurs in sparsely populated Northern communities

W-Power works with women entrepreneurs in sparsely populated areas across Northern and Arctic communities, encouraging them to set-up, develop and grow their businesses. The project will achieve this through capacity building and providing opportunities for transnational learning as well as creating and piloting a gender-aware business support concept.

W-Power project has come to an end with awesome results!

W-Power project´s goal has been to promote women entrepreneurship in project partner countries following the European and regional goals. Both at European and NPA region level the female creativity and entrepreneurial potential are an underexploited source of economic growth and jobs and should be further developed.

Transnational learning and sharing successful business models have been recognized to be the tools to reach the goal, and are central elements in W-Power implementation. As a RESULT, greater understanding of regional and transnational barriers impacting negatively on women entrepreneurs will be reached, as well as enhanced business support ecosystem for start-ups and small businesses helping to address these barriers.

1 Regional forums for empowering women entrepreneurs

Regional forums for empowering women entrepreneurship have been established as a result of WPT1 work. Forums will continue the improvement of regional business environment after project lifetime. Forum design will follow quadruple helix structure, thus in addition to SMEs and business advisory bodies, representatives of administration, education & research, and civil society will be engaged to the forum. Best practises, development areas and lessons learnt will be disseminated alongside the output launch.

W-Power LinkedIn group has become one of project participants´ main networking forum mainly in Finland and Finnish but also for international information sharing in English. We wish to activate the networking group to discuss and share their news even more in the future. We also wish to encourage new members to join the group as project lifetime experiences will definitely bring added value to new start-ups, women who wish to start their

own businesses or expand and enter international markets.

At the moment our congratulations to [Sara Kirsikka-Aho for becoming the 180th member](#) of our transnational networking group. Warm thanks to our existing members as well and welcome to new members to share your ideas, thoughts and concerns on this forum. Our wish is you will benefit of our networking forum and find new business contacts and cooperation possibilities.

The Realise Coaching Pilots were set up with the objective of providing smaller groups of female entrepreneurs with the opportunity to participate in a series of coaching sessions to implement gender sensitivity improvement in the delivery of business support through experimenting with group coaching for   female entrepreneurs leading to:

- Capacity building for female entrepreneurs
- Encouraging continued self-employment in sparsely populated communities

The pilot programmes were conducted using monthly, 2-hour virtual group coaching calls over a 6 month duration in response to both the constraints of Covid-19 and the remote location of some participants. All participants have formed a strong bond and will continue to meet and provide mutual support after the W-Power Project has finished.

Lynn Johnson (Realise Shetland Cohort 1) said: *The benefits and resources of which I will carry with me on my business and life journey. It is unquantifiable for me to summarise what this seemly basic concept of developing a women only business support group has provided me with (A lone, female, rural business woman, with no regular support contacts with knowledge of the challenges and potential solutions of the difficulties I face). I now feel a valued part of a core group of women, who's support continues to go from strength to strength - The investment in this project has proven its worth in the evidence that it has provided the catalyst for a sustainable tailored business support network.*

Mapping the challenges for women entrepreneurship in the Northern Periphery and Arctic

This report outlines, at the outset of the project, the state of women's entrepreneurship across partner regions: Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Scotland and Sweden, as well in Canada through our associate partner. It explores the challenges women face, barriers they can experience and national and regional approaches to help tackle them. Read the whole report here:
Mapping the challenges for women entrepreneurship in the Northern Periphery and Arctic

2 Transnational learning programme for women entrepreneurs

The project output is a model for transnational learning and capacity building of women entrepreneurs, based on regional and sectoral strengths. The elements of the transnational learning programme include upskilling both in regional and multicultural teams, networking across sectoral borders and interregional peer-to-peer mentoring scheme for women entrepreneurs. A model and guidelines for the programme have been created during the project based on piloting and co-creation. The output will be disseminated both inside the project partnership and stakeholders as well as outside the partnership.

Capacity Building Needs for Female Entrepreneurs in the Northern Periphery and Arctic

One of the project activities has been to provide a Baseline pre-survey to map specific needs for upskilling and capacity building of women entrepreneurs when starting and running a business. The survey was delivered in all project regions. In total, 178 women entrepreneurs have responded. The answers summarised in this report will play an important role in the development of a pilot Transnational learning platform for women entrepreneurs.

This report provides an overview of the answers given region by region. It highlights first and foremost the perceived needs and challenges as well as needs for upskilling when starting and running a business, but also tries to give a brief summary of the answers on remaining survey questions.

See the whole report here: **[Capacity Building Needs for Female Entrepreneurs in the Northern Periphery and Arctic](#)**

The peer-2-peer (P2P) Networking Programme
The P2P Networking Programme is a transnational exchange programme between women entrepreneurs in sparsely populated regions. Based on information (needs) in the application forms, applicants were matched in pairs or, occasionally, in teams. There were 42 applicants all together to the programme with 15 peer pairs of whom 11 pairs were actively in contact sharing experiences with each other.

Peer to peer program is based on genuine need

One of the W-Power project activities has been to provide a baseline pre[1]survey to map specific needs for upskilling and capacity building of

women entrepreneurs when starting and running a business. The survey was delivered in all project regions and in total, 178 women entrepreneurs responded. (Holmbom, Hägglund 2019) Besides of skills in digital marketing, social media and financing the group of respondents also expressed their need for network, mentors and good role models to share and discuss different business matters.

See the whole booklet here: [Microsoft Word - Peer to Peer programme in the Northern Periphery and Arctic (interreg-npa.eu)](interreg-npa.eu)

See the whole document here on how the participants were instructed on the process: [P2P Networking Programme info for participants](#)

[Peer-to-peer networking roles and responsibilities](#) **-**document describes the tasks and responsibilities as well as benefits for the visiting entrepreneur and hosting entrepreneur participating the programme.

Other transnational learning program outcomes were conducted as webinars and recording can be found on https://w-power.interreg-npa.eu/outputs-and-results/

and as text documents below:

[Personal branding and networking online](#)

[How to blog and write online](#)

[Strategic use of social media – How to create a plan that works?](#)

3 Gender-sensitive coaching concept (model and tools)

Gender-sensitive coaching concept (model and tools) created during the project will help business advisory bodies to confront existing and potential women entrepreneurs in their business services. Coaching concept includes aspects of diversity management and thus help the business advisors to better support different demographic groups (young women, housewives, immigrants, indigenous women). Women in project regions will also be encouraged to benefit the model and tools in their existing businesses or to set-up new businesses.

Gender-sensitive coaching concept model consist of following tools:

Orientation wheel: The purpose of this tool is to be a visual assistant for generation of the checklist to be used throughout the different phases of business support provision, by indicating the generic structure and framework for the development of the gender-sensitive approach.

Gender Sensitivity Check-List: In gender-sensitive business supports, gender is consistently considered throughout the business support cycle. Women's participation in entrepreneurship and their uptake of business supports (coaching, mentoring, training) must be encouraged. Business Supports must address women's needs, as well as men's and their realities. Research on the gender question, to enhance understanding of gender issues in entrepreneurial business supports, should be promoted. The purpose is to aid the implementation of gender-awareness pre-assessment outputs and their integration into all phases of business support development, design and implementation. It will help ensure that gender-sensitivity is habitually included as a part of the process.

Pre-Assessment Template: Provide the basis for intervention on gender-sensitivity and help formulate actions needed. This step requires extensive research

which needs to be regularly revisited, updated, improved and built up over time. The focus is on building a body of knowledge related to gender-awareness, to help address gender bias (conscious & unconscious) in providing business support (coaching/mentoring/training).

Gender Analysis – Factors of Influence: Gender analysis provides the necessary data and information to integrate a gender perspective into business support provision (e.g. coaching, mentoring, training). It identifies the differences in the context of entrepreneurship and receiving business support. It allows for the development of interventions that address gender inequalities and meet the different needs of women and men. The purpose of this tool is therefore to help provide basis for the pre-assessment research and to help identify factors of gender-awareness, as well as helping develop an understanding of the reality associated with the gender dimension and assist you in designing your business support strategy, programme or project. Quality of data within Gender Analysis is very important.

Continuous Improvement: Ex ante evaluation, analysis or assessment of a programme or project that makes it possible to identify, in a preventative way, the likelihood of a given decision having negative consequences for the state of equality between women and men. The central questions of the gender impact assessment: Does a programme or project reduce, maintain or increase the gender inequalities between women and men? Were there any unintended positive or negative changes in gender relations? What factors and strategies contributed to these changes?

Gender Sensitivity Train the Trainer: workshop describes the objectives, approach and expected outcomes of the process.

Business Model Canvas: is a tool for Business planning and evaluation.

Business Model Canvas

Fill in the boxes in numerical order by replying to the supporting questions

W-Power

7 Networks

1) What kind of (key) partners/(key suppliers) are required to produce/implement your product/service? Who can support your entrepreneurship?
2) Describe your connections and networks: are there already existing partners?
3) Think about / describe your other networks which could be of use for your business (as a board member, marketing partner, etc.)

2 My Business Idea

1) Describe your product/service
2) Why is it so good that a customer would purchase it?
3) How does it differ from an existing product/service in the market? What makes it original?
4) Describe the quality-price ratio of the product/service

1 Me as an entrepreneur

1) The significance of your education and work experience for the business idea
2) Hobbies that support your business idea
3) Your knowhow and strengths supporting this business idea

3 Customer relationships and segments

1) Describe your target customer group as accurately as possible
2) State the characteristics for this/these specific customer target group(s)
3) Identify: who is making the purchase decision within this group? What is the number of such potential customers?
4) Do you know the shopping habits of the target group? Describe them.
5) How is the market evolving?

4 Competitors

1) Identify your top competitors
2) What is the best way to stand out from your competitors? Describe their visibility and presence in the markets

5 Business operations

1) The physical resources: premises, personnel, equipment, data, brand patents etc.
2) Financial resources
3) Do you have recruiting needs or needs for subcontractors?

8 Risks

1) Identify the biggest risks in implementing your business idea
2) How can you reduce any such risks?

6 Channels for marketing and sales

1) State your most significant channels for marketing and sales
2) How do you organize sales in practice?
3) What is the image and brand you want to build for your product/service?

9 Financial management

1) How do you handle accounting and contractual matters?
2) What is the level of your financial management skills?
3) What are your needs for funding/cost structure? Have you organized funding and do you need help?
4) What are your most critical financial questions?

10 Revenue streams

1) How is your product/service priced? (Incl. sales commissions, logistics, taxation, etc.)
2) What is the annual target turnover to achieve profitability?
3) Have the entrepreneur's own salary and ancillary costs also been taken into account in the calculations?

11 Sustainability

1) How does your business idea take sustainable development into account (ecological, social, cultural, economic sustainability)?
2) Does sustainable development require specific resources? Do you need more resources/knowledge/support for this?

Empower. Network. Grow.

Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme

EUROPEAN UNION

4 Innovation platform for new pre-start-ups

Innovation platform for new pre-start-ups has been created and piloted during the project. Best regional practises were refined to a joint model, which enables new innovations with high business potential. Platform consists of clearly defined structure, design and code of conduct, which makes it easily transferable to different frameworks. Platform is especially suitable for knowledge intensive businesses, e.g. as an innovation tool for higher education students, but fail to refine their skills towards entrepreneurship. Thus, the platform created will help this process and rise the interest of skilful women of all ages to start their own business in sparsely populated communities.

Modelling the Innovation Platform for female entrepreneurs in the Northern Periphery and Arctic:
This publication is targeted especially for business advisors and developers and includes a detailed description of the process for arranging innovation platform for new pre-start-ups which is done via a business idea competition. Such competitions are aimed to stimulate increased interest from skilled women of all ages to start their own business in sparsely populated communities.

## Modelling the W-Power Innovation Platform for New Pre-Start-Ups

W-Power Innovation platform
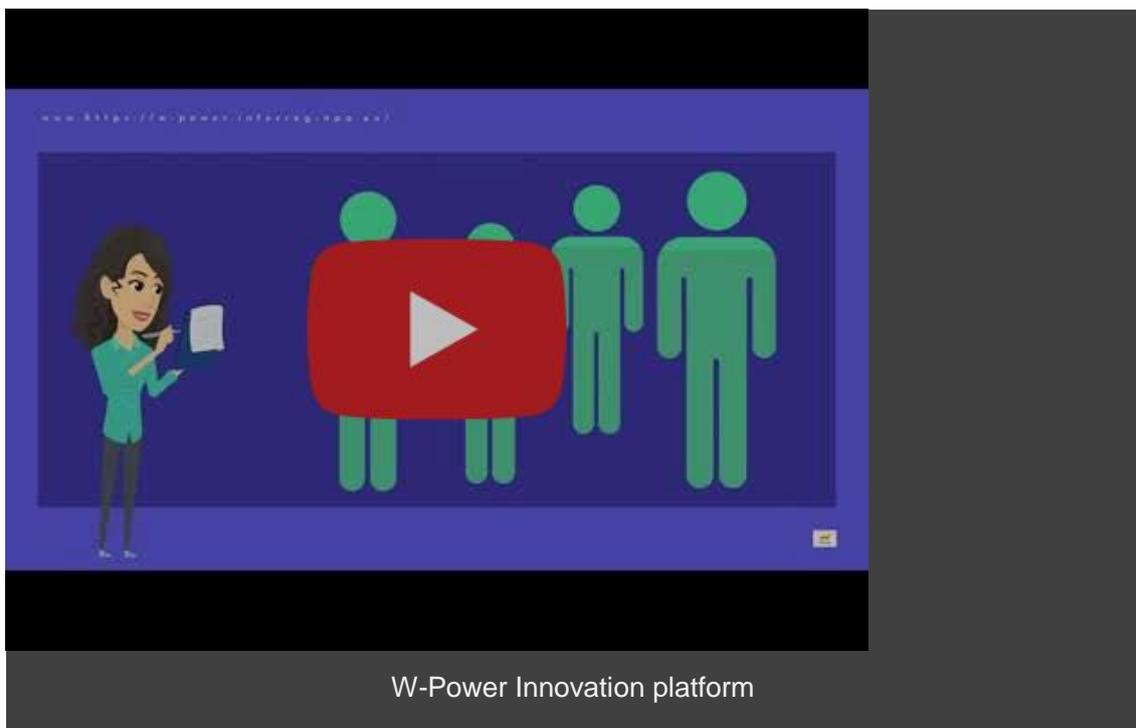
Project participant experiences

The Success Stories of W-Power Project from the NPA Programme Area and Beyond

The W-Power podcasts were produced to engage listeners all over the world hoping to reach women interested in entrepreneurship, business advisors, development companies and educational institutions. The podcast series one and two feature amazing women who have overcome the challenges posed by their remote geography to set up thriving small businesses. All of them have received support of one kind or another from W-Power.

In the latest W-Power podcast season nr. three, female entrepreneurs and some project members share their experiences on the benefits gained through the project activities. The project participants describe some of the best regional practices and lessons learned from each other. The season three represents women entrepreneurs from Finland, Sweden, Shetland and Scotland in four episodes hosted by Matthew Comber.
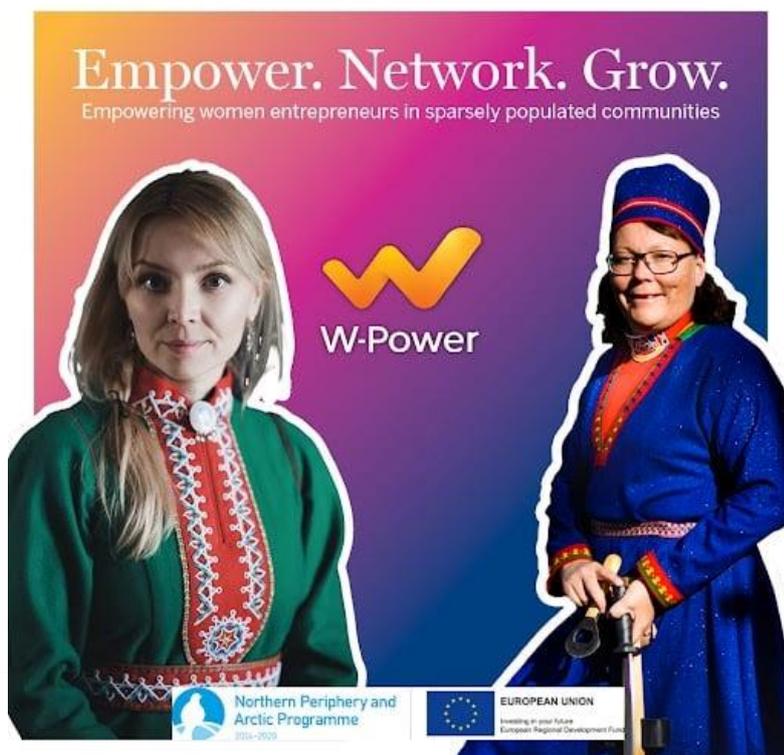
Build your network

- Join our international [LinkedIn-](#)community
- You can find us also on these channels:
    - Website: http://w-power.interreg-npa.eu
    - Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/wpowerproject/
    - Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/wpowerproject

W-Power Empowering women entrepreneurs in sparsely populated communities.

DATA PROTECTION POLICY

You have registered as a W-Power newsletter recipient at some of our events or by sending us e-mail.

In case you wish to unsubscribe, please contact: sini.yli-suvanto@lapinamk.fi.

Please, see Lapland University of Applied Sciences DATA PROTECTION POLICY