



## The WINNOVATORS Pilots

The WINnovators project is a unique training initiative aimed at fostering collaboration and innovation among young women in rural areas, higher education institutions (HEIs), and open innovation ecosystems (OIEs). The project focuses on empowering these women by helping them develop innovative job ideas in teamwork settings alongside HEI students and OIE experts.

Participants engage in team-based learning modules tailored to their interests, particularly in entrepreneurial activities related to STEM/STEAM and sustainability innovation. These challenges are customized for each location—Estonia, Serbia, and Slovenia—reflecting the specific interests of the young women, students, and the expertise of local mentors guiding the activities.

### ESTONIA

#### Pilot 1

In the initial phase of the WINnovators project in Estonia, the primary approach to engaging young women in vulnerable situations was through youth and community workers. These professionals played a critical role in establishing trust and fostering a sense of belonging among the participants. Target groups were identified with the help of local youth workers and included young adults in challenging life circumstances, young mothers, and unemployed young adults or school dropouts. Educational materials and challenges were designed to address these groups' specific needs and interests. Despite facing obstacles like partner withdrawal and participant dropouts, the youth work students were pivotal in reaching out and engaging potential participants. The students, guided by their mentors, worked on project proposals that aimed to empower young adults through collaborative project work, enhancing both their professional and entrepreneurial skills.

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## Pilot 2

The second phase of the Estonian pilot saw the development of six distinct projects, each addressing different aspects of youth empowerment. These projects included initiatives like the "Regional Youth Initiative Day," focusing on socialization and community engagement, and the "Youth Sleep Habits" project, which aimed to improve mental health through better sleep practices. Other projects, such as "Young Adults in the Youth Work," encouraged active participation in youth center activities, while the "Survival Skills Camp" taught practical crisis management skills. The "Street Art in Small Village" project promoted artistic expression and community building through graffiti workshops, and an exchange student-led gardening initiative fostered environmental awareness among children. Despite challenges in execution and collaboration, each project contributed to the overarching goal of developing proactive, creative, and socially responsible young individuals.

## SLOVENIA

### Pilot 1

Case 1: Exhibition on Sustainable Aspects of Connecting Humans and Nature

In March 2023, Slovenia initiated the Winnovators project, targeting 20 women from vulnerable groups in rural areas or the PUM program, along with 20 University of Ljubljana students. These participants formed four groups to tackle specific challenges, working in smaller teams to foster collaboration and support. The project commenced with an introductory Zoom event, where participants were divided into groups based on their interests. Students contributed their expertise to projects such as developing interactivities, 360° virtual tours, and data visualization, using tools like Scratch and Canva. Weekly tasks were assigned by mentors, who also provided feedback, ensuring continuous engagement. The project emphasized teamwork, digital literacy, problem-solving, and sustainable living, highlighted by a successful collaboration on a photo exhibition project that raised awareness about sustainability. However, challenges included inactivity among participants,

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prompting efforts to re-engage them through various communication channels.

## Case 2: Baby Clothes Flea Market

Second-year youth work students participated in the Winnovator project through a course on project work. The course aimed to prepare students for youth work, focusing on project management and engaging young adults. Collaboration with local youth workers identified participants, forming a team of four students and two young mothers. The project aimed to reduce the ecological footprint and financial strain on families by organizing a baby clothes flea market. Communication was facilitated through Messenger and Drive, with weekly meetings ensuring progress. The project taught students project writing, needs analysis, goal setting, fundraising, and risk management. The final proposal centered on a community-engaging event that included a café setup, childcare, and parenting information sessions. This approach highlighted the importance of structured learning, active participation, and leveraging digital tools for collaboration.

## Pilot 2

The second phase of the Winnovators project in Slovenia began on February 28, 2024, at the University of Ljubljana's Faculty of Education. This phase saw significant interest, attracting 90 participants, including 24 students and a diverse group of women from vulnerable backgrounds, supported by the Slovenian Employment Service and the Cene Štupar Association. The project offered four learning challenges: selling products on Etsy, exploring influencer opportunities, co-creating visual content with Canva, and designing mini-games with Scratch. The training included remote Zoom lectures from experts, complemented by hands-on projects. Participants worked collaboratively with peers and mentors to develop and refine innovative business ideas, enhancing their entrepreneurial skills and practical application of knowledge. This hybrid approach fostered a dynamic learning environment, empowering participants to turn their ideas into viable business ventures.

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## SERBIA

### Pilot 1

The first phase of the WINnovators project in Serbia launched in April 2023 with a focus on boosting entrepreneurial skills among young women from rural and marginalized communities, including Roma and rejected asylum seekers. This initial phase engaged 15 young women who teamed up with 15 female students to form collaborative units. The participants underwent training in STEM and STEAM entrepreneurship, facilitated by mentors from BADEN Network and the Association of Business Women in Serbia (ABW Serbia). Each team developed a business plan, guided through individual mentorship. Notable successes included the creation of holistic massage services and multi-sector companies, which highlighted the program's effectiveness in providing practical entrepreneurial skills and boosting participants' confidence to seek funding and implement their business ideas. This phase concluded in June 2023 with a proposal to extend activities due to time constraints faced by the participants.

### Pilot 2

The second phase of the WINnovators project kicked off on February 28, 2024, continuing its mission to foster digital, entrepreneurial, and STEM/STEAM skills among young women in rural areas. This phase emphasized capacity building in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) through innovative teaching approaches and gamified e-trainings. It aimed to create a supportive community for young women, students, educators, and trainers by providing interactive working spaces and resources. Key activities included several engagement meetings and a multiplier event that expanded the project's impact. Noteworthy initiatives included a free Digital Marketing course at the Belgrade Banking Academy, reinforcing the project's commitment to empowering women through education and promoting entrepreneurship. This phase sought to create change agents among participants, enabling them to drive innovation and sustainability in their communities.

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