

The logo features the text 'WeRin' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a stylized sunburst or flower icon composed of several overlapping, semi-transparent petals in shades of purple, pink, and orange. The background of the top half of the cover is a black and white photograph of two women in a professional setting. One woman is in the foreground, seen from the side, wearing a dark blazer. The other woman is in the background, smiling and holding a pen, appearing to be in a meeting or presentation. The image is partially obscured by large, overlapping geometric shapes in shades of orange, purple, and pink.

Women Entrepreneurship and Education

e-zine

WeRin Project

| Issue 1/August 2021





Welcome to the WeRin Project Newsletter!

We are delighted to introduce you to the bi-annual magazine, dedicated to Women Entrepreneurs in Regional Inclusive Entrepreneurial Ecosystems (WeRin), a forward-thinking European initiative with a team of 14 partners who are passionate about increasing the share of female graduate entrepreneurs.

With this project, we, a group of academics and practitioners passionate about entrepreneurship, aim to make entrepreneurship education and support programmes more inclusive for women.

What is in this issue?

Our first issue encourages you to explore the concept, highlighting the motivation and the vision of our project (p. 04) as well as the key activities the consortium will undertake over the next 3 years (p. 06).

To further feed your curiosity, this issue previews our research, aimed at exploring the current state of research on women entrepreneurship in higher education, gender inclusivity, and the inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems (p. 09).

To bring the theoretical discussion closer to the world of practice, we identified five trends in female entrepreneurship in the German ecosystem of North Rhine-Westphalia (p. 11).

We spotlight a selection of fascinating women entrepreneurs based in the Netherlands. Hear from esteemed Melanie Rieback (Radically Open Security) (p.19), and Marian Spier (IAMarian and FEM-START) (p. 22).

To conclude, meet a selection of our project partners Science-to-Business Marketing Research Centre (Germany), University Industry Innovation Network - UIIN (the Netherlands) and Momentum (Ireland).

We wish you a pleasant read!

*University Industry Innovation Network (UIIN)
on behalf of the WeRin Project Consortium*



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About WeRin – Setting the Stage

WeRin, a new project to increase women's entrepreneurship

Author: Orla Casey, CEO of Momentum

International Women's Day 2021, March 8th, 2021, very appropriately marked the official launch of the WeRin project, Women Entrepreneurs in Regional Inclusive Entrepreneurial Ecosystems.

Lead project partner, FH Münster University of Applied Sciences, led partners from across six countries to announce their ambition to make entrepreneurship education and support programmes more inclusive and increase the share of female graduate entrepreneurs.

Given that women represent about 60% of the HEI graduates, their under-representation amongst start-ups is a clear challenge. Despite a rise in participation of female students in entrepreneurship education at Higher Education Institutes (HEI's), they still lag behind compared to their male counterparts.

Even when women have participated in entrepreneurship education, they are less likely to move towards actual entrepreneurial careers after they graduate. When they do, these graduate female entrepreneurs are less well embedded in the regional entrepreneurial ecosystem: fewer of them participate in local incubation or acceleration programmes, seek, and receive funding and are active in regional enterprise networks.

A pioneering European initiative, WeRin brings together 14 partners from Germany, Netherlands, Turkey, Ireland, Croatia, and Norway.

WeRin partners have ambitious plans to enhance the inclusivity of regional entrepreneurial

ecosystems and embeddedness of female entrepreneurs through the design of more inclusive academic and non-academic entrepreneurship education and support programmes.

Sue Rossano-Rivero, Junior Professor for Entrepreneurship and International Business Development at FH Münster University of Applied Sciences, explains the project has very tangible targets "Together with our EU colleagues, we are intent on making an impact. We aim to increase the share of female participation in entrepreneurship education by 15% and in entrepreneurship support programmes by 20% of consortium partners, three years after completion of the project. Our project title could not be more appropriate – We R In is a statement of intent".

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Dr. Sue Rossano-Rivero



There are many opportunities to get involved in and benefit from WeRIIn.

Thorsten Kliewe, Professor and Director of the Science-to-Business Marketing Research Centre FH Münster University of Applied Sciences, explains, “Inclusive (entrepreneurship) education requires an approach investigating how to transform education systems and other learning environments to respond to the diversity of learners. Our concept of inclusion is not only on the gender dimension but also on the structural dimension. We want to embed female students and graduates into the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem. It is an exciting time to put the spotlight on increasing the share of female graduate entrepreneurs.

WeRIIn provides great opportunities for educators, policymakers, funding bodies and those working to increase the number of female entrepreneurs.

Over the next three years, we will highlight good practices in the region, carry out a regional analysis of gender inclusivity and organise many events including international capacity building sessions and communities of practice”.

“Inclusive (entrepreneurship) education requires an approach investigating how to transform education systems and other learning environments to respond to the diversity of learners.

Our concept of inclusion is not only on the gender dimension but also on the structural dimension.

We want to embed female students and graduates into the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem”

Prof Dr. Thorsten Kliewe

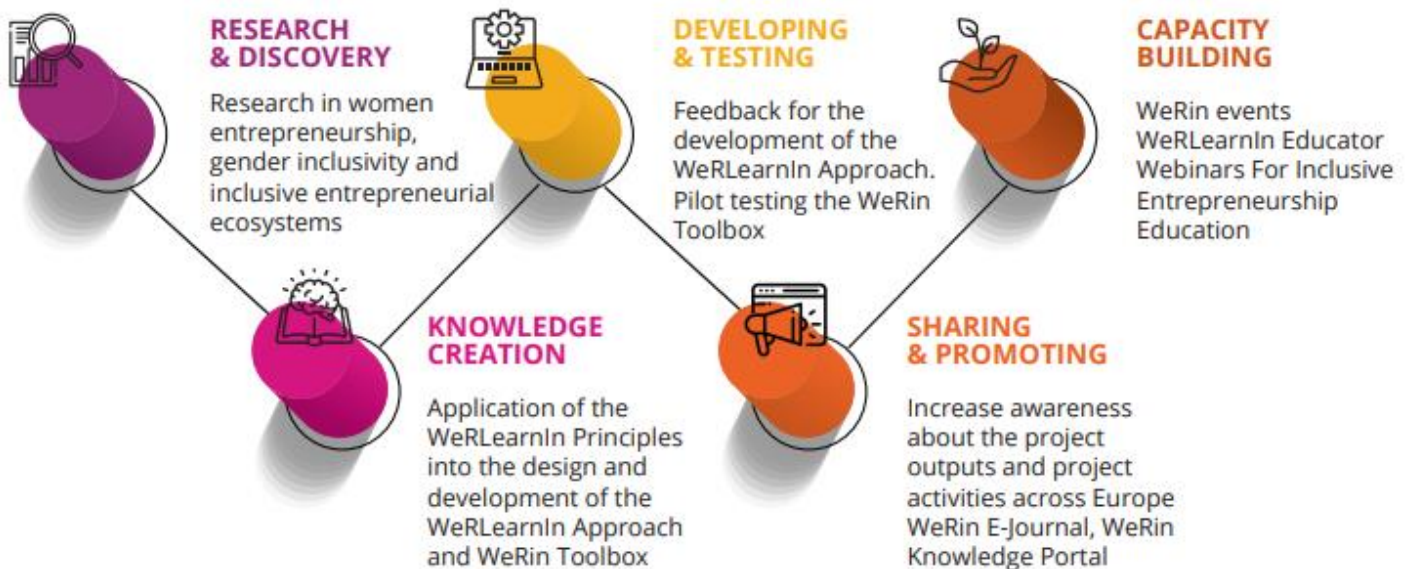


Exploring the WeRin activities the consortium will undertake to make entrepreneurship education more inclusive for women

Author: Amelie de Rooij, UIIN

With tangible targets, WeRin plans to increase the share of female participation in entrepreneurship education by 15% and in entrepreneurship support programmes by 20% within three years of project completion. Here is an overview of our key activities and deliverables.

OUR KEY ACTIVITIES



OUR KEY DELIVERABLES

- ✓ WeRin Toolbox
- ✓ WeRin Knowledge Port
- ✓ WeRLearnIn Approach

Activity 1: Research & Discovery

This first phase of Research & Discovery has the goal to understand the current state of research on (women) entrepreneurship in higher education (HEI) and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems, as well as to identify the current state of gender-inclusivity of academic and non-academic entrepreneurship education and support programmes offered in each region.

What key activities will we undertake?

Drawing on the scientific and policy literature published in the past 10 years an overview of the **current insights** into recent developments in entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial ecosystems will be provided. Simultaneously, a **regional inclusivity scan** of entrepreneurial ecosystems will be undertaken.

Additionally, **good practices case studies** for embedding women (graduate) entrepreneurs on entrepreneurial ecosystems will be developed, while presenting, for each of the participating regions, a list of regionally embedded **female role models**.

Activity 2: Knowledge Creation

This phase of Knowledge Creation covers the design of the Innovative and Inclusive Learning Approach for Women Entrepreneurship, conceptualised as the **WeRLearnIn Approach**, which will result in the following deliverable:

- a) the establishment of the **WeRLearning guiding principles** on how to design inclusive entrepreneurship education and support programs that foster the embedding of female entrepreneurs into the local ecosystem.
- b) the design and development of the **WeRin Knowledge Port** to be used for storing Open Access Educational Resources such as: teaching guides, evaluation rubrics, audio-visual teaching resources, relevant MOOCs, documentaries, Ted

Talks, Case Studies to be used by Entrepreneurship Educators/Mentors/Sponsors.

- c) the development of the **WeRin Toolbox** to support educators and managers of supporting programs in implementing the general WeRLearnIn Approach.

Activity 3: Developing & Piloting

During autumn 2021, local workshops called Think-tanks will be organised with the local project audience to discuss findings and provide local context and inputs into the **WeRLearnIn Approach**.

When developed, the project team will test and validate the WeRin Toolbox and WeRLearnIn Approach through the implementation of a pilot test for student end-users and the collection of feedback from both recipients/users and educators/mentors and other stakeholders involved.

Activity 4: Sharing & Promoting

Tremendous efforts will be created by the project partnership in sharing and promoting the knowledge created. Key activities for knowledge sharing will include:

- **WeRin Knowledge Port**, a collection of 65 educational resources accessible for free on the project website.
- the **Next in female entrepreneurship infographic series**, a trend book on female entrepreneurship consisting of role model profiles and activities infographic from the inclusivity scan.
- The **International Webinar for educators**, highlighting and explaining the project's outputs, learning resources and WeRLearnIn Principles.

Activity 5 : Capacity Building

This last stage of the project aims to build capacity by developing the pedagogical skills, knowledge and attitudes needed of the entrepreneurship educators and managers to use the WeRin Toolbox and to deliver the WeRLearnIn approach. It also aims to launch and develop the Community of Practice with the objective to sustain the WeRin project after the end of the activities. This will be done by :

- Conducting **International and Local Capacity Building Sessions (CBS)** where Entrepreneurship educators and Entrepreneurship programmes managers will be trained in the use of the WeRin Toolbox to educate and train their final beneficiaries. They will also be granted access (even after project completion) to the WeRin knowledge port and be part of the WeRin Community of Practice (CoP) for lifelong learning in the topic of inclusive entrepreneurship education, with the opportunity to co-produce new knowledge with peers at an international level.
- Designing and launching the **WeRin Community of Practice (CoP)** which will include educators and directors of entrepreneurship programmes. The CoP will be hosted on the project's website and will also serve as a means for establishing commitment to the new paradigm on inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems.
- Developing **virtual study tours** among partners' best local good practices in the form of short webinars. A pool of 14 good practice webinars will be available as teaching material and included in the WeRin Toolbox.

Our Audience

Our audience are

- **female students in HEIs** (undergraduates, graduates and post-graduates)
- **aspiring female entrepreneurs** already graduated from HEIs
- **female entrepreneurs** looking for growth.

Benefits

- Equip entrepreneurship educators with **the skills and knowledge to design a more inclusive** entrepreneurship education program
- Equip educators with the **tools and materials** included in the WeRin approach for the redesign of their own programs
- Provide (both female and male) students with a **better understanding** of how inclusivity (or lack thereof) affects their entrepreneurial potential

Women in Entrepreneurial Ecosystems: discussion and trends



Understanding current research on inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems

Author: Dr. Sue Rossano-Rivero, Iulia-Maria Stroilla and Hacer Tercanli (Science-to-Business Marketing Research Centre, FH Münster)

Led by the Science to Business Marketing Research Centre (S2BMRC) of Münster University of Applied Sciences, the **Research & Discovery phase** of the project (Work Package #3) has yielded its initial results.

Along with the project consortium made up of 14 partners and representing six European countries, the S2BMRC team conducted interviews with numerous entrepreneurship experts to explore the current state of research on women entrepreneurship in higher education, gender inclusivity, and the inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems. The researchers applied a scientific approach to the research setting and design in order to keep the process transparent and to minimize bias in the literature.

A total of 93 papers were identified based on previously defined key search terms on various data bases, of which a significant number were empirical studies from the years 2012-2021.

Gender-inclusive ecosystems are the key to women entrepreneurship

Regarding gender-inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems, it is suggested that ecosystems play an essential role in entrepreneurial activity and can both facilitate and hinder it. However, it is unclear to what extent gender influences the relationship between ecosystems and the positive or negative impact on entrepreneurial

activity.

Moreover, women are faced with critical challenges in obtaining sufficient financing to start and develop their ventures as well as are not effectively engaged by support organizations such as incubators and accelerators.

Furthermore, some studies suggest that significantly fewer women than men are involved in academic entrepreneurship especially in STEM disciplines. However, women's commercialization operation tends to be of higher quality than men's, which could be explained by the fact that women academics seek to commercialize their research under challenging circumstances, many of which are related to implicit gender biases in the education system.

Moreover, entrepreneurship is strongly linked with individuality, persistence, self-confidence, high productivity, and decisiveness which may have a negative impact on women's entrepreneurial self-perception, as women academic entrepreneurs tend to be motivated by wanting to implement their scientific research, as a result, achieving a positive value for society rather than financial gain and popularity.

Women academic entrepreneurs tend to be motivated by wanting to implement their scientific research, as a result, achieving a positive value for society rather than financial gain and popularity.

Diverse role models and networks needed for women empowerment

A factor in explaining the gender gap in entrepreneurship is that women entrepreneurs hardly have access to role models and networks. Research suggests that the perceived behaviour control and attitudes towards entrepreneurship are highly influenced by role models especially for females.

Therefore, it is recommended to show female role models from various fields more prominently in the media and thus empowering and encouraging young women for entrepreneurship activities.

Additionally, entrepreneurship education, policy makers and media should promote a non-stereotyped image of entrepreneurship and foster this career option, particularly among women.

Research suggests that the perceived behaviors control and attitudes towards entrepreneurship are highly influenced by role models especially for females.

Gender bias and stereotypes persist

Furthermore, it emerged clearly that women are faced with gender bias and stereotypes in entrepreneurship, which create additional barriers for women i.e., women-founded start-ups receiving significantly less venture capital from investors. In the field of (gender-inclusive) entrepreneurial education it has been demonstrated that female students may disprove the gender-based stereotypes once it had been discussed openly and directly in schooling and media.

Moreover, research suggests that education and entrepreneurial training is highly beneficial in developing competencies during career phases. Integrating more mixed and qualitative approaches into the research portfolio on entrepreneurial students could shed light on the potential causes of gender disparities in outcomes.

In summary, the report indicated that there are still large disparities between genders in terms of opportunities in the field of entrepreneurship and generated a research agenda that calls for further research in this field.





Picture from ThisIsEngineering; Retrieved from pexels.com

Five trends in female entrepreneurship in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany

Author: Camila Molina and Hugo Buitrago (ACEEU)

Entrepreneurship and innovation should become a source of opportunities helping societies to construct wellbeing for all. The gender gap seems to be a worrying inequality that can be addressed to reduce its impact on women. Gründen NRW (the platform for entrepreneurship from Ministry of Economics, Innovation, Digitization and Energy of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia) found that in its entrepreneurial ecosystem, between only 11 to 29 percent of the entrepreneurs are women (studies have produced diverse results).

The region is addressing the gap with diverse strategies that are generating trends in female

entrepreneurship and may consolidate as practices that guarantee gender equality in the search of inclusive societies.

In this article, we present five recent trends in North Rhine-Westphalia that frame the initiatives and the consolidation of gender-inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems.

These initiatives articulate diverse actors of the ecosystem such as the regional government, banking industry, higher education institutions, and aspiring and consolidated female entrepreneurs. These are the five trends in female entrepreneurship in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany.

Trend #1: Strengthening of gender inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems

North Rhine-Westphalia has set the goal of increasing the number of women starting their own business to 33% by 2025. A recent opinion study found that despite that there are more than 32 % of women who would like to start their own business, less than 29 % dare to do so.

This mismatch between aspirations and actual action inspired the state Ministry of Economy to set the 33% goal. For achieving this goal, a comprehensive strategy was launched. It includes the creation of services such as a Women Entrepreneurship Center, a women's mentor network, advice for women starting up in business, the Female Innovation Hub, and the Global Digital Women Initiative.

These initiatives tailor services to support women from different backgrounds to successfully start their own business, aiming to contribute to the closing of the existing gender gap in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

This way, entrepreneurship could become a source of opportunities for all, having equality as a solid basis.

For more information visit the [Ministry for the Economy, Innovation, Digitalisation and Energy in the state of North Rhine Westphalia](#)

Trend #2: Opportunity as a driver for female entrepreneurs

The group of female entrepreneurs who opt for self-employment, despite the good labor market conditions, are mainly driven by the fact that they have a potentially scalable business model idea and they want to implement it. It is also observed that more previously inactive people—i.e., housewives and students—are starting businesses. This is a trend that has been easily observable in their dynamics for several years now (1). Against this background, women also start a business with the goal to "make a difference" and "effect a change."

The group of female entrepreneurs who opt for self-employment, despite the good labor market conditions, are mainly driven by the fact that they have a potentially scalable business model idea and they want to implement it.

Picture from RF_...studio; Retrieved from pexels.com



For this reason, female founders usually focus their activities on customers and social issues. Contribution to society is seen as an equally important goal alongside economic success. According to a thorough evaluation carried out as part of the study "Corporate Social Responsibility in German SMEs" in 2011, female entrepreneurs are more likely than male entrepreneurs to get involved in cultural, social, and other societal projects beyond the legal requirements and are more open to the issue of corporate social responsibility (2).

Lastly, employment status is also a decisive factor for starting a business; almost half of the women decide to become self-employed from dependent employment. Accordingly, only very few women start their businesses directly after completing their education. Instead, they first gain a few years of work experience (3). On the other hand, a 2011 study by the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) also describes the tendency for more and more women over 50 to start their businesses. At this age, successful female managers are looking for new ways to implement their interests, convictions, and experience by creating their own business (4).

It should also be noted that female entrepreneurs have higher educational qualifications than men, and more self-employed female academics among them than among men (5). This trend is also confirmed by the results of the detailed evaluation of the KfW Start-up Monitor 2009, which found an overall better level of education among female founders compared to male founders, measured by the degrees they have attained (6). Overall, it shows that a large proportion of female founders have an "apprenticeship or vocational degree" (7).

Given this trend, the former German Minister for Emancipation, Barbara Steffens, states that female entrepreneurs in the North Rhine-

Westphalia are creative when it comes to finding ideas; they pool their professional experience, and often occupy niches with their businesses that have not been seen before.

In this way, the business fields are as diverse as the reasons why women have chosen the path of self-employment. In addition, it is noted that female entrepreneurs in the region are highly qualified and possess qualities such as communication skills, a sense of responsibility, and foresight (8).

Trend #3: Growing access to grants and financing facilities for female entrepreneurs

The NRW Bank introduced specialized services of advice for women starting businesses and seminars that consolidate the image of businesswomen as an important actor of the entrepreneurial ecosystem. This initiative is articulated to the Enterprise Europe Network (NRW.Europa), the world's largest network supporting and connecting companies, universities, and research institutions. In North Rhine-Westphalia, the network is articulated with ZENIT GmbH (Mülheim), NRW.BANK (Düsseldorf and Münster) and NRW.International GmbH (Düsseldorf). The Enterprise Europe Network launched the Women Entrepreneurship Sector Group offering services such as connections with clients, co-operation with partners, access innovation services and financial instruments, and articulation of existing woman entrepreneurship networks. Access to an ecosystem of services and support plays a vital role in the promotion of female entrepreneurs to emerge in the region and to expand start-ups and different projects at an international level.



Picture from Nataliya Vaitkevich; Retrieved from pexels.com

On the other hand, one of the most popular and most supportive initiatives for entrepreneurs and especially for female entrepreneurs is the **Gründerstipendium NRW**.

This grant offers entrepreneurs the opportunity to launch their innovative business idea and enter the start-up scene in their region. In this way, The Ministry of Economics, Innovation, Digitalization and Energy of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia supports every founder who is about to or at the beginning of setting up a company with a monthly grant of 1,000 euros for up to one year to help them get started in the world of entrepreneurship.

Trend #4: Consolidation of regional networks with the support of higher education institutions

Within the framework of the project Women Entrepreneurs in Science, the Bergische Universität Wuppertal (University of Wuppertal), established a state-wide higher education network for women starting their own business. This project is coordinated by the Excellence Start-up Center NRW of the university and aims to establish a cross-university network of female founders in the region. This way, the network will increase cooperation among female academic entrepreneurs, create visible role models, and develop a female start-up culture. Women founders' summits, women founders' round tables, and speed dating events for women are held regularly in this network. Future female founders at universities in North Rhine-Westphalia and in other higher education institutions can also get advice from this network. Within the initiative, there is also an incubator program to support female entrepreneurs and their companies at universities and establish a mentoring network.

Trend # 5 : Creation of mechanisms for encouraging females to develop their start-ups and spin-offs.

The visible gender gap in entrepreneurship is leading universities to take actions to support women in their way to construct networks and role models in the start-ups, spin-offs, and business world.

Ruhr-Universität Bochum (RUB) identified that only 16 % of the participants in their Worldfactory Start-up Center were women. They state that the problem is not the lack of good ideas, but the lack of self-confidence, networks and female role models. It poses the question, what are effective supports to increase the participation of women founders of start-ups and spin-offs?

Certainly, there is not a unique answer to the previous question, but one initiative that could be highlighted as a good practice in the field is the launching of programs with a gender focus. RUB launched in 2000 the program FACE@RUB (Female Academic Entrepreneurs at RUB). This program is embedded in the Worldfactory Start-up Center, a unit that incentivises the creation and development of start-ups, and supported by the Ministry of the Economy, Innovation, Digitalisation and Energy for North Rhine-Westphalia. RUB connects the specific gap with the already constructed capacities in the university and the state funding to support such initiative.

The previous examples of trends and action in gender inclusion in the regional entrepreneurial ecosystems present a panorama of action taken to ensure the construction of more equitable societies.

This regional context demonstrates that it is necessary to tackle inequalities in the consolidation of entrepreneurial ecosystems to introduce measures for mitigating the exclusion of certain segments of the population. Gender inclusion is one affirmative action, among many

other needs that also require concrete action for avoiding negative impacts.

References:

- (1) Bundesministeriums für Wirtschaft und Energie - BMWi, 2018
- (2) (4) BGA Bundesweite Gründerinnenagentur, 2015.
- (3) cf. Josten et al., 2008
- (5) cf. Bührmann and Pongratz, 2010
- (6) cf. KfW Research, 2009b
- (7) cf. KfW Research, 2014a
- (8) Landesregierung NRW, 2011

Picture from ThisIsEngineering; Retrieved from pexels.com





Meet the Change-Makers



Melanie Rieback

CEO of Radically Open Security

19

Sector or industry

Computer security

Number of employees

Over 40 freelancers

Year started as entrepreneur

2014

Location

Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Age

42

Attributes

Curious, hard-worker and ambitious.

Motto

"I just try to be useful, try to leave the world better than you found it"

About Melanie

Melanie Rieback is an entrepreneur, CEO and co-founder of Radically Open Security, a social enterprise in the computer security space which is also the world's first not-for-profit computer security consultancy company.

Melanie was named 2010 ICT Professional of the Year (Finalist) by WomeninIT, one of the 400 most successful women in the Netherlands by Viva Magazine (Viva400) in 2010 and 2017, one of the fifty most inspiring women in tech (Inspiring Fifty Netherlands) in 2016, 2017, and 2019.

She was also called the Most Innovative IT Leader by CIO Magazine NL (TIM Award) in 2017, and one of the 9 Most Innovative Women in the European Union (EU Women Innovators Prize) in 2019.

Her company, Radically Open Security was named the 50th Most Innovative SME by the Dutch Chamber of Commerce (MKB Innovatie Top 100) in 2016.

Melanie Rieback is a computer security professional and social entrepreneur. She holds a bachelor's degree in biology and computer science from the University of Miami. She participated on the Human Genome Project and then realized that she was more interested on the computer side of things, rather than the biology side of things.

After that, Melanie studied a master's degree at the Technical University of Delft, in the Netherlands, and switched to computer security, since she had been interested in it for a long time.

After finalising her PhD in Security and Privacy of Radio Frequency Identification Technology, at the Free University of Amsterdam, Melanie worked there as an assistant professor for five years.

Melanie describes herself as an innovative person and a high achiever, which she illustrates by using the example of her not-for-profit company that gives all its profit to charity. In this sense, Melanie says that she likes to do things that are not conventional and that she is currently trying to incubate other companies with a similar business model.

Melanie's Entrepreneurial Journey

Radically Open Security was founded in 2014 as the world's first not-for-profit computer security consultancy company. The company currently employs 40 freelancers and is prototyping an innovative new business model using a Dutch fiscal fundraising institution to provide a commercial front-end that sends 90% of their profits to a backend foundation (Stichting NLnet) that has supported open-source, Internet research, and digital rights organizations for almost 20 years.

According to Melanie there were three main reasons to build the company and to do so in the way it is built now. The first reason was Melanie's philosophical and ethical differences with other market players in the computer security industry. Secondly, companies in the sector are motivated

mostly by profit which makes them unappealing and demotivating for idealistic people such as ethical hackers or members of the open-source community. Third, the decision to make it a social enterprise was to show that computer security could be done differently, that there could be an alternative on the market for both the staff members, as well as for the customers.

“The decision to make it a social enterprise was to show that computer security could be done differently, that there could be an alternative on the market”.

Melanie says that, although the company has grown quite fast and is now a medium size player, she is not seeking more growth, but instead, is more interested in making the staff, customers, and herself happy and in being able to deliver the quality promised. For the rest, Melanie finds more appealing the idea of helping others to start their own companies that operate in the same way as Radically Open Security or to create a network of smaller companies that are run by different people, where she can empower others and provide them with the tools they need to build similar kinds of social entities.

When asked about her personal experience as a woman entrepreneur, Melanie says that she has always experienced that as an advantage, since women are a minority in tech and science - even more so in cybersecurity- a woman who is competent at what she does will easily stand out. For her the gender has not been a barrier and it has qualified her for prizes such as being a finalist at the EU Women Innovator prize, which has granted her “a lot of really nice attention”.

Melanie is part of a variety of security and IT networks, and she is also involved in the DevOps community, as well as the start-up ecosystem.

Lately, she has been getting more involved with the Post Growth movement and has had the opportunity to partner with both the Post Growth Institute and Tim Jackson. She is now working on projects that are starting to attract a broader audience than she would have been able to attract with cybersecurity alone.

Inspiration

As sources of inspiration, Melanie mentions the Post Growth movement, Kate Raworth and her Doughnut Economics, as well as Frederic Laloux and his Reinventing Organizations, Zebras Unite and the Holacracy movement. She also finds inspiring authors such as Douglas Rushkoff, Muhammad Yunus and everything he has been doing in terms of social business, as well as many individual social entrepreneurs. In terms of role models,

Melanie is prompt to answer that Andy Tanenbaum, professor emeritus of computer science at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, her promoter from when she was doing her PhD, is her largest hero and mentor. She highlights his passion, enthusiasm, and his place in computing history, as well as the best-selling textbooks he has produced. Melanie emphasizes that she learned from him almost everything she knows now about conceiving, running, leading, funding and managing projects.

Advice

In terms of advice to young female entrepreneurs, Melanie would say "believe in yourself. You can do pretty much everything you want to do. Don't worry about something being weird or unusual." She adds "Try to find people that you admire, respect, and reach out to them. You might find that they are willing to talk to you, mentor you or maybe just have a cup of coffee and give you some advice."

Author: Jose Villagran (UIIN)



“ Try to find people that you admire, respect, and reach out to them. You might find that they are willing to talk to you, mentor you or maybe just have a cup of coffee and give you some advice. ”



Marian Spier
Social Entrepreneur

Marian Spier

CEO of IAMarian and FEM-START

22

Sector or industry

Tech inclusion & Female entrepreneurship

Number of employees

Over 40 freelancers

Year started as entrepreneur

2012

Location

The Hague, the Netherlands

Age

51

Attributes

Proactive, efficient, and autonomous

Motto

"Everything is possible"

About Marian Spier

Marian Spier is a social entrepreneur, consultant, CEO, and founder of TEDxAmsterdamWomen and FEM-START. She has been a manager and lecturer at the University of Applied Sciences, Amsterdam, for eight years. In 2012, she started consulting and had built a diverse portfolio of clients in 15+ countries that range from industries, sectors, and size like S4 Capital, Firewood, MediaMonks, Ace & Tate, BNNVARA, NDT, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Economics, the City of Amsterdam, United Nations, World Humanitarian Summit, UNESCO, TEDx in Europe, the Caribbean and TED.com. She founded the first Female Startup Award in the Netherlands and serves as an advisor and board member of several non-profits like the Van Gogh Museum, Van den Ende Foundation, and Het Hem.

Marian Spier is a 51-year-old social impact and cultural strategist. She was born in Amsterdam, raised in Suriname and now lives in The Hague, Netherlands. She studied communications, worked in education, and then went on to study pedagogy and didactics. After that she followed several 'strategic partnerships' executive programs via INSEAD and venture finance to get more insights into how ecosystems work.

Marian describes herself as very proactive and extremely efficient. Efficiency is crucial for Marian, both because she has worked with virtual teams since 2009, and because as an entrepreneur, every single penny spent is from your own pocket. When talking about autonomy, Marian mentions that her name means freedom in French. She says that it is essential to be autonomous as an entrepreneur because you need to make decisions every single day. Marian is proud to say that what she has achieved so far is beyond her expectation.

Marian has recently published her book IMPACT. 'lessons in personal and business leadership'. In this book she both reflects on her own road to leadership and has also interviewed both men and women on how they became a leader themselves.

When Marian is not working, she likes to both travel and walk a lot. She also loves to listen to podcasts about writing and arts, especially listening to things that she has never heard before. Marian also enjoys online streaming platforms to relax her mind.

Marian's Entrepreneurial Journey

Marian has two companies. IAMarian and FEM-START. IAMarian is a consultancy company that Marian founded in 2012. Marian consults large corporations, governments, and cities on tech inclusion and entrepreneurship. She has a team of freelancers that work on the operational side, which operates internationally. These freelancers are employed based on the project requirements. Marian also advises many scale-ups that are

growing rapidly on how to build a diverse and inclusive culture for their organisation.

More recently, Marian founded FEM-START, an online learning platform for female entrepreneurs to bridge the gap in funding. FEM-START includes both a mentoring platform, which is non-profit and an online learning platform. This learning platform will include four 2-hour modules courses, where female entrepreneurs can learn everything about raising funding for their own start-up. Marian points out that many people are not aware that there are 252 million female entrepreneurs in the world.

Marian is aware of the bias in raising funding for female entrepreneurs. It is very easy to raise funds of below 100.000, but between 100.000 and 1 million it gets difficult. Raising funding above 1 million is almost impossible, especially in the Netherlands. In 2020, only 11 women raised funding this high. This is 0.8% of the start-ups. The other 99.2% was raised by men.

Marian believes that female entrepreneurs can bridge this gap by doing two things. First, female entrepreneurs need to educate themselves on how the world of funding works. Second, as an entrepreneur, you have to have perseverance and not give up: 'Sometimes you have to go through the window if the door does not open'.

“Raising funding above 1 million is almost impossible, especially in the Netherlands. In 2020, only 11 women raised funding this high. This is 0.8% of the start-ups.”

A challenge that Marian has encountered in her own entrepreneurial journey is finding the right people for the team, people that understand and are willing to support the mission of the company. This is a challenge for every company nowadays.

Marian is involved in many networks. She believes that being involved in women networks is good for empowerment, but if you really need to raise funding for example, you must also be involved in other networks. Marian's criterium is that every network she is involved in should have added value for her business. Too often, she sees people network without having a strategy on how to network and knowing what they want to achieve.

Inspiration

Talking about inspiration, Marian does not have one specific company that inspires her. However, in terms of funding, Bumble is a good example, having raised 1 billion. This is an IPO, which is an extremely stressful process. To prevent the employees from burning out, the employee decided to give her whole team a week off. In general, Marian comments that a business is not something that you admire, because it is only focussed on revenue. Marian does however have many role models that inspire her. Rather than having one specific person, she likes to take the good traits of each person. Marian is especially inspired by entrepreneurs that started with nothing and became extremely successful.

Advice

Marian's advice to girls and women who want to realise their dream is to start working somewhere. Young female students should finish their education and start a business right away, or already start a business when they are still studying. The group of women that starts later should start working with an entrepreneur to learn from them. Once they become an entrepreneur themselves, they should go for it and not be afraid.



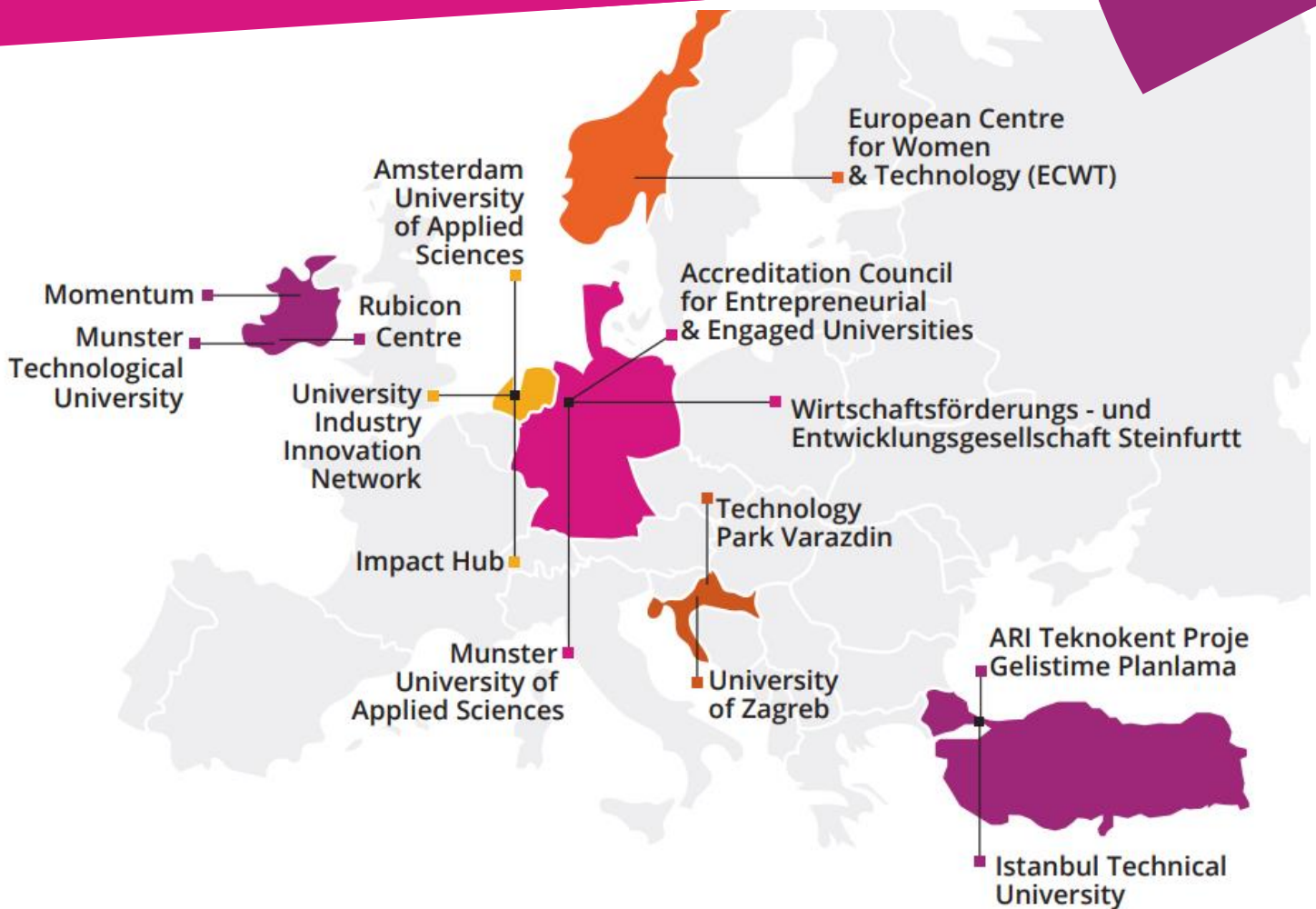
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Author: Fleur Schellekens (UIN)

Meet the WeRin partners





Our WeRin partnership across Europe

Funded by the ERASMUS+ Knowledge Alliance programme, the Women Entrepreneurs in Regional Inclusive Entrepreneurial Ecosystems – WeRin Project unites **14 partners** from network organizations, associations, research institutes, academia and businesses based in six countries in Europe.

Their expertise and strong reputation make a solid foundation for successful achievement of the intended project results.



Science-to-Business Marketing Research Centre – WeRin Lead

The WeRin project will be led and coordinated by Science-to-Business Marketing Research Center (S2BMRC). Residing within the Münster University of Applied Sciences (MUAS) in Germany, the S2BMRC is recognised world-wide for its approach to Science-to-Business Marketing. The centre has more than 30 team members and researchers and has developed knowledge, models and tools in entrepreneurship, university-business cooperation, innovation and technology transfer.

The S2BMRC, under the leadership of Prof. Dr Sue Sue Rossano-Rivero, is delighted for the opportunity to represent the WeRin project in front of the European Commission and coordinate the consortium throughout the project activities.

Jun. Prof. Dr. Sue Rossano-Rivero originally from Mexico is currently the leader of the research line Science-to-Business at Science-to-Business Marketing Research Centre of MUAS. Dr. Rossano-Rivero is an academic entrepreneur who actively engages with business and society for knowledge transfer and the generation of resources for the university. In the last 5 years, she has generated more than €800.000 in external funding for the FH Münster.

She has initiated and established the gender dimension in the Science-to-Business Marketing Research Centre, which has changed the focus and understanding of topics such as University-Business Cooperation, Innovation, Networking and sustainable entrepreneurship ecosystems. Dr Rossano-Rivero is an expert on entrepreneurship and value creation by fostering interaction between science, industry and society. Her expertise focuses on the entrepreneurial and networking behaviour of academics, scientists and students as a way to transfer knowledge to business and society.



FH MÜNSTER
University of Applied Sciences

Science Marketing

Science-to-Business Marketing Research Centre

Meet the S2BMRC project team



Jun. Prof. Dr. Sue Sue Rossano-Rivero
WeRin project Leader



Iulia Stroila
WeRin Lead
Researcher



Hacer Tercanli
WeRin Dissemination
Activities

UIIN, ensuring WeRin project's valorisation and sustainability



Meet the UIIN project team



Alexandra Zinovyeva
Manager EU Projects, UIIN



Amelie de Rooij
WeRin Lead
Researcher



Mario Ceccarelli
WeRin Dissemination
Activities

UIIN is an international leader on university-industry engagement, entrepreneurial & engaged universities and knowledge transfer.

UIIN is dedicated to advancing the future of higher education institutions and supporting their global community of university-industry professionals. They conduct research, organise events and provide training and consultancy services to our community of +80 organisational and 500+ individual members.

Founded in 2012, UIIN responded to a developing need within university-industry interaction moving away from the linear process of technology transfer and a shift towards a more holistic and strategic approach by all stakeholders involved. With their consulting offerings, professional training and events, the UIIN team actively convert research into practice and support universities, business and government in developing stronger and more strategic relationships, more future-oriented institutions and ultimately building a knowledge society for a better tomorrow.

Within the WeRin project, UIIN will design the Sustainability and Valorisation agenda and execution of the project. UIIN is also well positioned to effectively support and facilitate the dissemination and promotion of the project and its results. As a prominent network organization, UIIN has a unique ability to understand and bring together entrepreneurship education and business. With access to key contacts in academia and industry, and with various communication and distribution channels reaching a large variety of European stakeholders, UIIN will ensure that the value created will also be effectively exploited.

Sharing and Promoting WeRin with Momentum

Momentum is one of Ireland's leading innovation and entrepreneurship specialists, recognised as thought leading strategists, facilitators and educators in transformation through innovation.

Founded in 2003, Momentum is a female led and operated organisation and is very aware of the multitude of barriers faced by female entrepreneurs - lack of technical expertise, lack of role models, low self-confidence, challenge of attracting investment and backing from banking institutions, low levels of risk taking are all debilitating factors which affect women.

Momentum has grown rapidly in size and now employs 24 staff and subcontractors. Momentum equips over 600 learners per annum through our sought-after classroom training courses and thousands others through our blended learning and online courses including webinars and eLearning environments.

Momentum is a strong dissemination partner experienced in generating the best possible impact on national/regional/ international levels. With marketing at its core, Momentum operates an inhouse marketing division specialising in brand development, content generation, communication and public relations strategies, digital media and social media and the development of high impact promotional campaigns and resources attracting high profile attention to their projects.

Momentum is therefore very excited to be the brand and communication architect behind the WeRin project. The team recently finalised the fantastic [WeRin website](#). Make sure to visit it for more information on the project and to follow us to get your updates!

momentum
[educate + innovate]

Meet Momentum Project Team



Orla Casey
Founder and CEO



Samantha Carty
EU Project Specialist



WeRin

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