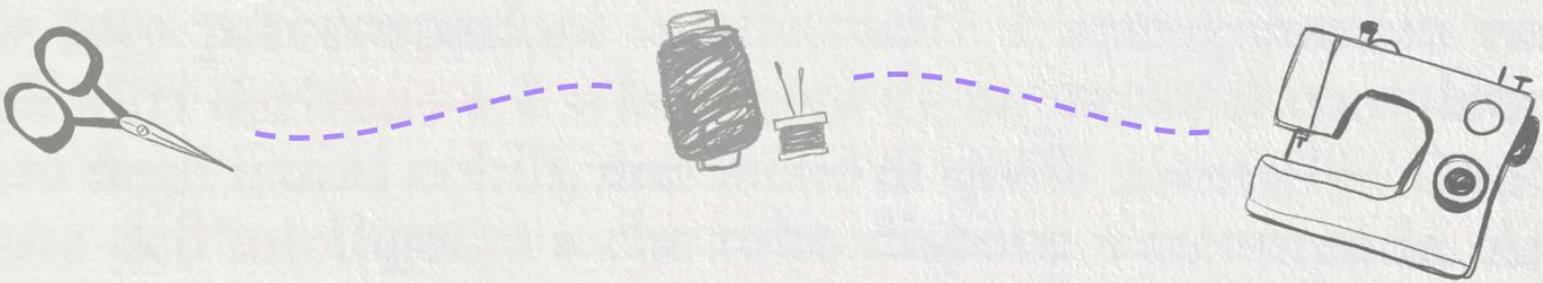


BE A MANAGER

TRAINER'S GUIDE



Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



W4TEX: Strengthening Women's Representation in Senior Textile Positions

PROJECT NUMBER: 2023-1-SE01-KA220-ADU-000154918

Duration of the project: 01-11-2023 - 30-04-2026

Be a manager TRAINERS' GUIDE

Date: 11.03.2026

Version 2.0

Table of contents

1. Introduction & Purpose of the W4TEX Trainers Guide.....	5
1.1 Project Overview	5
1.2 Purpose of the Be a Manager Trainers' Guide	6
2. The W4TEX Ideathon approach.....	8
2.1 Objectives.....	9
2.2 Training Methodologies	10
2.2.1 Icebreaking	10
2.2.2 Presentation-based lecture	11
2.2.3 Role playing	12
2.2.4 Practical workshop.....	13
2.2.5 Field visit.....	13
2.2.6 Teamwork	14
2.2.7 Ideas pitching.....	16
2.3 Transferability.....	18
3. Training content & Lesson Plans	21
3.1 Topic 1: Fast fashion	21
3.2 Topic 2: Circularity.....	23
3.3 Topic 3: Textile recycling & waste	24
3.4 Lesson plans	26
3.4.1 Lesson plan for the topic of fast fashion	26
3.4.2 Lesson plan for the topic of circularity in textiles.....	28
3.4.3 Lesson plan for the topic of textile recycling and waste	31
4. Facilitation styles & methods	36
4.1 Facilitation tips.....	36
4.2 Participants' engagement tips	38
4.3 Inclusion tips.....	39
5. Training resources	42
6. Ideathons insights, testimonials & visual gallery	43
6.1 National ideathon insights	43
6.1.1 Sweden.....	43
6.1.2 Greece.....	44

6.1.3 Spain.....	45
6.1.4 Italy	48
6.1.5 Belgium.....	49
6.1.6 Ukraine	51
6.2 Transnational ideathon insights.....	53
6.3 Video testimonials	55
7. Conclusions & lessons learned.....	58



1. Introduction & Purpose of the W4TEX Trainers Guide

1.1 Project Overview

The **W4TEX project** aims to strengthen the role of women in the European textile ecosystem by addressing two major challenges: the persistent underrepresentation of women in managerial and decision-making positions and the urgent need for a more sustainable textile sector. These priorities are highly relevant in the current European context, where the textile industry is under pressure to align with the **European Green Deal**, circular economy objectives, and new sustainability requirements, while gender equality remains a core EU priority.



In response, W4TEX supports women working or aspiring to work in the textile sector by developing their **managerial, entrepreneurial, and sustainability-related competencies**. The project is grounded in the belief that women's empowerment in this field requires not only access to knowledge but also practical opportunities for collaboration, innovation, and professional networking. For this reason, W4TEX combines adult education, sector-specific upskilling, and transnational cooperation in a single framework.

The project pursues several strategic objectives. It develops a **training package** for women and educators focused on managerial skills in the textile sector, as well as a **green practices toolset** to support environmentally responsible business approaches. In addition, it organises **Ideathons**, which serve as collaborative learning and innovation spaces where women can build entrepreneurial skills, explore solutions for the textile sector, and strengthen their readiness for labour market integration. W4TEX also seeks to motivate women to pursue leadership roles, increase their confidence in decision-making, and foster stronger links between women, SME managers, and textile stakeholders across Europe.

A central methodological output of the project is the **W4TEX Trainers' Guide**, which supports trainers in delivering high-quality learning experiences within



the W4TEX framework. The Guide is designed as a practical tool that helps trainers use the project results effectively, especially during the Ideathon activities, by providing methodological guidance, training approaches, and implementation support.

Overall, W4TEX contributes to wider European goals related to **gender equality, sustainable transition in the textile industry, and innovation in adult education**. More than a training project, it is a strategic initiative that supports women's leadership, promotes greener practices, and helps shape a more inclusive and sustainable future for the European textile sector.

1.2 Purpose of the Be a Manager Trainers' Guide

The **Be a Manager Trainers' Guide** was developed to serve as a practical and methodological support tool for trainers who implement the educational activities of the W4TEX project, with a particular focus on the Ideathon process. Its purpose is to ensure that the training experience is not delivered as an isolated event, but as a structured learning journey that combines sustainability awareness, leadership development, collaborative problem-solving, and entrepreneurial thinking within the textile sector. In this sense, the Guide was created to help trainers translate the wider objectives of W4TEX into concrete, well-organised, and high-quality learning experiences for women participating in the project.

The Guide should be used as a **reference and facilitation manual** before, during, and after the training activities. Before implementation, trainers can use it to prepare the learning process, understand the thematic priorities of the project, select appropriate methodologies, and organise the necessary resources. During implementation, it supports trainers in facilitating sessions, managing group dynamics, encouraging inclusive participation, and guiding participants through each stage of the Ideathon, from problem analysis to solution design and final presentation. After the activities, it can also be used as a reflection and improvement tool, helping trainers evaluate outcomes, capture lessons learned, and adapt future sessions to the needs of different target groups.

In practical terms, the Guide brings together the key elements needed for effective delivery: the conceptual framework of the W4TEX Ideathon, training methodologies, thematic content, lesson plans, facilitation tips, inclusion guidance, and training resources. This makes it useful not only for experienced trainers, but also for facilitators who may be new to Ideathon-based learning or to gender-responsive and sustainability-oriented training in the textile sector. By offering structured guidance alongside adaptable tools, the Guide enables trainers to create participatory learning environments, empowering and closely connected to real sectoral challenges.



Ultimately, the purpose of the Be a Manager Trainers' Guide is to strengthen the educational impact of W4TEX by equipping trainers with the knowledge, structure, and practical tools needed to support women's leadership development in the textile ecosystem. It ensures that the project's training activities contribute not only to skills acquisition, but also to confidence-building, networking, and the active engagement of women as future managers, innovators, and decision-makers in a more sustainable textile sector.



2. The W4TEX Ideathon approach

The W4TEX Ideathon constitutes a structured training intervention designed to combine leadership empowerment, sustainability awareness, and practical innovation within the textile sector. It moves beyond the concept of a one-day event and functions as a facilitated learning ecosystem where knowledge acquisition, collaborative ideation, and solution validation are integrated into a coherent pedagogical process.

Within W4TEX, the Ideathon performs three mutually reinforcing functions that extend beyond traditional training formats.

First, it functions as a **structured learning pathway**, enabling participants to build informed understanding of fast fashion dynamics, circular economy transitions, and textile waste management before engaging in solution design. Knowledge acquisition is not isolated from practice; it is intentionally positioned as the foundation for evidence-based decision-making.

Second, it acts as a **leadership activation mechanism**. Through collaborative problem-solving, public pitching, and peer feedback, participants strengthen strategic thinking, negotiation capacity, and confidence in articulating sustainability-driven business proposals. The Ideathon environment encourages women to move from participation to ownership, from reflection to action.



Third, it functions as a **sectoral innovation catalyst**. By connecting sustainability challenges with real business contexts, the process generates ideas that are simultaneously environmentally responsible, socially conscious, and economically aware. This ensures that proposed solutions are not theoretical aspirations but grounded responses to market realities.

The Ideathon methodology follows a structured progression that transforms participants from learners into solution designers. Rather than relying on spontaneous creativity, the process systematically guides participants from



contextual understanding to strategic proposal development. Participants critically examine real challenges, identify root causes, explore alternative approaches, assess environmental and social impact, and refine their concepts into coherent, presentable solutions. The final pitching and evaluation phase reinforces accountability, feasibility thinking, and market awareness, ensuring that ideas are tested against innovation, sustainability, and business criteria.

This structured pathway guarantees methodological consistency across national and transnational implementations while preserving flexibility for local adaptation.

This process ensures that ideation is evidence-based rather than intuitive. Participants do not merely “generate ideas”; they analyse systemic causes, assess environmental and social impact, and consider feasibility and business value before proposing solutions.

The Ideathon, therefore, bridges theory and practice. It positions women not only as contributors to sustainability debates but as strategic decision-makers capable of shaping business models, leading innovation, and influencing sectoral transformation.

2.1 Objectives

The W4TEX Ideathon aims to:

- strengthen participants’ understanding of systemic **challenges** in the textile industry (fast fashion dynamics, circular economy principles, textile waste management).
- develop **analytical skills** for problem identification and root-cause analysis.
- foster **structured ideation** and solution-design competencies.
- enhance **communication** and **pitching skills** within professional contexts.

By the end of the Ideathon process, participants are expected to demonstrate improved knowledge of sustainability transitions and increased confidence in proposing strategic solutions.

Strategic objectives

The Ideathon supports:

- the development of leadership mindsets among women in textiles.
- increased capacity for collaborative innovation.
- greater awareness of business viability alongside environmental and social responsibility.



- cross-sector dialogue between entrepreneurs, aspiring managers, SMEs, and stakeholders.

It also promotes the integration of sustainability into strategic business thinking rather than treating it as an isolated environmental issue.

Impact objectives

At ecosystem level, the Ideathon aims to:

- generate implementable ideas aligned with circular economy principles.
- encourage networking and mentorship between experienced professionals and emerging leaders.
- strengthen women's visibility as innovators and decision-makers.
- promote systemic thinking within the textile value chain.

Ultimately, the Ideathon contributes to long-term cultural change by reinforcing the message that sustainability and leadership are interconnected drivers of competitiveness and resilience in the textile sector.

2.2 Training Methodologies

The W4TEX Ideathon is grounded in two complementary adult education approaches: **experiential learning** and **collaborative learning**. These approaches ensure that participants do not passively receive knowledge but actively construct it through structured interaction, reflection, and applied problem-solving.

Rather than separating theory from practice, the Ideathon integrates knowledge acquisition, real-world exposure, teamwork, and structured ideation into a coherent learning journey.

2.2.1 Icebreaking

Icebreaking within the W4TEX Ideathon is not treated as a simple energiser but as a structured entry mechanism into collaborative and experiential learning. Given the diversity of participants, including entrepreneurs, professionals, students, and aspiring managers, the first phase of the Ideathon is designed to establish psychological safety, mutual recognition, and shared purpose.

The “Identity Cycle” activity and the textile-focused interactive Bingo exercises, as implemented in both national and transnational ideathons, functioned as structured social mapping tools. Participants were invited to engage with prompts related to sustainability practices, professional aspirations, creative experience, and sectoral knowledge. Through movement and guided interaction, they discovered commonalities and differences within the group.



This approach served multiple pedagogical objectives:

- **activation of prior knowledge:** participants recognised existing competences and experiences relevant to textile sustainability and leadership.
- **reduction of hierarchy:** differences in seniority or professional status were softened through informal dialogue.
- **early confidence-building:** participants engaged in low-risk interaction before moving to analytical and strategic tasks.
- **foundation for teamwork:** initial trust-building improved later collaboration during ideation and pitching phases.

From an adult education perspective, structured icebreaking enhances motivation and participation by positioning learners as active contributors from the outset. This points out that the Ideathon is participant-driven rather than lecture-driven.

Importantly, icebreaking also reinforces the empowerment objective of W4TEX. By encouraging each participant to speak, move, and connect early in the process, it challenges passive roles and fosters a mindset of engagement and leadership readiness.

As a result, the icebreaking phase functions as a deliberate methodological bridge between individual presence and collective innovation.

2.2.2 Presentation-based lecture

The presentation-based lecture format was focused on core competencies around **problem-solving, strategic thinking, and planning**. This is a flexible method that can also be applied in shorter ideathon settings and can be tailored to diverse participants, including industry professionals representing different segments or levels. By employing these methods, participants can cultivate a more systematic approach towards addressing problems and tasks, and a sharper awareness of strategic thinking. Ultimately, this helps in developing skills to identify, define, address and solve a challenge in more efficient and innovative ways.

The method begins with a concise lecture to introduce a new topic or an additional angle to address a specific topic. This is done to provide enhanced knowledge and introduce a variety of perspectives, equipping learners with multiple viewpoints. The second phase in this method transitions into engaging the learners through an added reflection session after the lecture. Here, learners first engage in individual self-reflection or small group reflection, followed by a discussion in the larger group. This structured approach allows



the entire learner group to benefit from the unique insights surfaced during the smaller breakout discussions.

From an adult education context, this method provided enhanced knowledge regarding structured approaches to address challenges that may arise in both an educational and managerial context. It provides new angles of addressing and solving challenges, making the decision-making process more efficient.

Overall, the presentation-based lectures guide learners to gain foundational knowledge from an educator on a specific topic or skill. The learners are then engaged in topical discussion to facilitate collaborative peer-learning.

2.2.3 Role playing

Serving as a dynamic and experiential training methodology designed to immerse participants in realistic management and sustainability scenarios by stepping participants into specific roles. In the context of the W4TEX Ideathon, **role-playing** is particularly effective for **developing leadership and communication skills**. It allows women to experiment with different managerial styles, practice negotiation, and navigate the decision-making processes inherent in the green transition. This methodology moves beyond passive learning, encouraging participants to internalise the challenges of the textile sector and develop the confidence needed to act as change agents, particularly in leadership roles that are often more scrutinised due to gender dynamics.

From an adult education perspective, role-playing is highly valuable as it promotes empathy and perspective-shifting. It delivers "learning by doing" by embodying different stakeholders (e.g., a garment worker, a policy maker, or a consumer), participants gain a deeper, systemic understanding of the textile industry.





2.2.4 Practical workshop

The practical workshop format used in the W4TEX Ideathon translated theoretical inputs into **structured action**. These **short, guided sessions** allowed participants to apply tools and methods related to leadership, sustainability, and innovation in the fashion and textile sector.

Workshops introduced step-by-step approaches to **strategic planning, problem definition, and solution development**. Facilitators provided clear instructions and “mini” challenges, enabling participants to apply practical frameworks in a focused and manageable way. This approach supported adult learners by prioritising immediately applicable tools over abstract theory, helping them connect new knowledge directly to real situations.

Sessions were intentionally interactive. Brief facilitator inputs were followed by exercises on problem framing, impact identification, idea prioritisation, and concept generation. Facilitators acted as guides rather than instructors, encouraging critical thinking and reflection throughout the process.

These activities also functioned as **preparation for the main ideathon** challenge, helping participants build confidence, exchange ideas, and become comfortable working together before addressing more complex tasks. The structured format provided clarity for less experienced participants while allowing more experienced professionals to deepen analysis and contribute strategic insight.

From an adult education perspective, the workshop method promotes learning by doing, peer exchange, and immediate feedback. It strengthens autonomy, critical thinking, and confidence while reinforcing the relevance of learning outcomes to real-world challenges.

Overall, the practical workshop format enhanced participant engagement and improved the quality of ideathon outcomes by positioning learners as active problem-solvers and co-creators, in line with the empowerment and capacity-building objectives of W4TEX.

2.2.5 Field visit

The field visit component of the W4TEX Transnational Ideathon in Greece constituted a core experiential learning intervention, directly connecting sustainability theory with industrial practice. Participants engaged in two structured study visits in Larissa, Greece.

The first visit took place at **BETTINA Textile Factory**, where participants were introduced to textile production processes, working conditions, and the integration of environmentally responsible practices within a manufacturing environment. The visit provided insight into operational realities, including resource management, production efficiency, and quality control, allowing



participants to observe how sustainability considerations are embedded within conventional production structures.

The second visit took place at **Green Innovative Company (GRINCO)**, a company focusing on circular solutions and innovation in textiles. Participants explored alternative material uses, waste valorisation practices, and innovation-driven business approaches that challenge linear production models. This exposure highlighted how sustainability can function not only as compliance but as a strategic competitive advantage.

The pedagogical objectives of the field visits were multifold, as follows:

- contextualization of the 3 ideathon thematic pillars (fast fashion, circularity, textile waste & recycling) within real business environments.
- exposure of the participants to both traditional manufacturing and circular innovation models.
- stimulation of critical reflection on the feasibility of sustainability transitions.
- strengthening of participants' capacity to frame realistic and implementable solutions during the ideation phase.

Following the study visits, a guided reflection session allowed participants to synthesize insights and identify transferable lessons for the Ideathon challenges. This reflective stage ensured that observation was transformed into analytical input for subsequent teamwork phases, including challenge definition, brainstorming, and evaluation.

From a methodological perspective, the field visits reinforced experiential learning by situating knowledge within lived professional environments. They enhanced strategic thinking by confronting participants with real constraints and trade-offs, thereby elevating the quality, feasibility, and relevance of the final ideathon proposals.

2.2.6 Teamwork

Teamwork is one of the core pedagogical elements of the W4TEX Ideathon. Its primary objective is to enable participants to collaboratively analyse real sustainability challenges in the textile sector and co-create feasible, innovative solutions. Rather than working individually, participants are engaged in structured group processes that mirror real business environments, requiring strategic thinking, decision-making, negotiation, and shared leadership. Thus, the teamwork component is aimed at:

- Strengthen collaborative problem-solving skills
- Foster leadership competences among women in the textile sector



- Encourage critical reflection on environmental, social, and economic impacts
- Transform theoretical knowledge into actionable business concepts

By working in teams, participants move from passive learning to active co-creation, positioning themselves as decision-makers and change agents within the green transition.

Methodological structure of teamwork during the ideathon:

Team formation and role allocation: Teams of 3-5 members (depending on national / European implementation) Each team selected a name and assigned roles. This structure ensured accountability, equal participation, and efficient time use.

Challenge definition: Using the “Data Collection” template, teams selected a sustainability challenge (fast fashion, circularity, textile waste) and analysed:

- Origin and causes of the problem
- Social and environmental impacts
- Key stakeholders involved
- Current systemic gaps

This phase emphasised analytical thinking and evidence-based understanding.

Ideation phase: Teams generated a minimum of 10 ideas without judging feasibility. Quantity was prioritised over quality to stimulate creativity. The guiding questions (“What? Who? How? Where? When?”) helped structure ideas.

Key principles:

- No judgement
- Build on others’ ideas
- Encourage all voices
- Combine creativity with practicality

Evaluation and decision-making: Using evaluation criteria aligned with the evaluation rubric (creativity, feasibility, sustainability, business impact), teams critically assessed alternatives and selected the most promising solution. This stage strengthened strategic decision-making skills.

Creative development: Teams refined their concept, defined value proposition, target group, sustainability model, and competitive advantage. The focus shifted from idea generation to business-oriented structuring.

During the implementation, the teamwork methodology added significant value:

1) Teamwork created a **safe and empowering space** for women to express ideas, test leadership roles, and practice public speaking. They could structure team roles (coordinator, researcher, designer/creative, presenter,...) and



generally, leadership was shared and diversified. Participants experienced different managerial functions in a practical setting, increasing their confidence and sense of agency.

2) Collaborative work strengthened transversal competences essential for career advancement, such as **strategic planning, task organisation, communication and negotiation skills**.

3) Teamwork promoted **peer learning**. Participants with different professional backgrounds (designers, entrepreneurs, adult students) exchanged knowledge and perspectives, broadening their understanding of systemic challenges.

4) Teamwork reinforced the idea that **leadership** is not hierarchical but **collective**. Participants explored how female leadership can be facilitative, inclusive, and strategic, challenging traditional stereotypes around authority and management.

2.2.7 Ideas pitching

Part 1: Purpose of the session

The Ideas Pitching session, held on the final day of the ideathon, represented **the culmination of participants' collaborative work**. This session had three main purposes: to present the results of teams' work, to develop participants' public speaking and presentation skills, and to receive feedback and validation from industry experts on the viability of their solutions.

Part 2: Preparation process

Prior to the pitching session, each team received mentoring support to help refine their ideas and presentation skills. Teams presented their draft concepts to mentors, received constructive feedback, and made improvements before the final pitch.

Teams then worked to **define their core message and key information**. They experimented with different approaches, such as starting with a compelling question, using storytelling, or opening with a surprising fact.

Part 3: Pitch format and rules

Element	Details
Timing	3 minutes for presentation + 2 minutes for jury questions
Delivery	One team member presents; all members answer questions
Submission	Final presentation to be sent by a set deadline



All teams were informed of the submission deadline in advance, with a slide displayed on the wall as a reminder. This gave the technical team time to prepare.

At the start of the pitches, each team was clearly reminded that they had five minutes to present and answer the questions from the jury. Teams could choose one person or several people to present, but they were advised that, with only five minutes, it was better to have one presenter while the rest of the team stayed ready to answer questions from the jury. One member of the organiser's team was assigned to keep time and to stop the presentation if it went over the limit.

Presentation structure

Teams were advised to organise their pitches following five clear parts:

Section	Purpose
Problem	Explain the challenge being addressed
Solution	Present the proposed idea
Advantages	Highlight how this solution differs from existing approaches
Impact	Describe the positive change the solution would create
Call to Action	Tell the jury and audience what is needed from them

Evaluation criteria

Criterion	Description	Score	Rating
Creativity	Originality of the idea	1-5	Poor to Excellent
Realistic	Feasibility of implementation	1-5	Poor to Excellent
Sustainability	Environmental and social responsibility	1-5	Poor to Excellent
Impact	Potential for positive change	1-5	Poor to Excellent



Presentation	Clarity and effectiveness of communication	1-5	Poor to Excellent
---------------------	--	-----	-------------------

Each criterion was scored from **1 (poor)** to **5 (excellent)**, giving teams a clear understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement. After all the presentations, the jury took time to discuss the results and agree on a winner before making the announcement.

Additional guidance for presenters

Beyond structure and rules, participants received practical advice on delivery:

- Be clear and concise;
- Focus on one key idea rather than trying to cover everything.

By using this structured approach, the W4TEX Ideathon ensured that final ideas were not only well developed but also clearly communicated, increasing their potential for real-world impact and giving participants a valuable, practical learning experience.

2.3 Transferability

The W4TEX Ideathon model has been designed as a **transferable and adaptable framework** that can be replicated beyond the project partnership in different geographical, educational, and professional contexts. Its main strength lies in the combination of a **clear methodological structure** with enough flexibility to respond to different target groups, organisational settings, and thematic priorities. This makes it possible for other organisations to adopt the model while preserving its core educational value.

At the centre of the W4TEX Ideathon is a learning approach that combines **leadership development, sustainability awareness, teamwork, experiential learning, and innovation processes**. These elements are not exclusive to the textile sector, which means that the format can be applied in other fields while maintaining its relevance and impact. The basic structure of the Ideathon (introduction, challenge presentation, brainstorming, team-based collaboration, mentoring, and pitching) offers a solid pedagogical foundation that encourages creativity, problem-solving, peer learning, and active participation.

A key factor supporting transferability is the **modular design** of the Ideathon. The format includes a variety of possible components, such as lectures, workshops, group work, study visits, mentoring, and final presentations. Future facilitators can therefore select and combine the most suitable elements according to their objectives, available time, and participant needs. This allows the Ideathon to be implemented as a **standalone event**, a **shortened version**, or as part of a wider educational or training programme. The experience of the



Spanish National Ideathon, for instance, demonstrated that the model can also be successfully integrated into a vocational education and training curriculum, confirming its value in both formal and non-formal learning environments.

The transferability of the model is further strengthened by the project's **ready-to-use materials**. Through W4TEX, partners have developed agendas, facilitator guidance, workshop structures, and evaluation tools that can be adapted by other organisations or trainers. Since these resources are already available and tested, future users can organise similar events with limited preparation time and fewer resource demands. This makes the model particularly useful for training centres, VET providers, civic organisations, women's support organisations, chambers of commerce, SME networks, and other stakeholders interested in supporting women in the textile sector.

Another important aspect is the possibility to deliver the Ideathon in **face-to-face, hybrid, or fully online formats**. Lectures and thematic inputs can be provided through webinars, teamwork can take place in virtual breakout rooms, and pitching sessions can be organised through videoconferencing tools. This flexibility increases accessibility, especially for organisations with limited budgets or for participants living in remote areas, and makes the model easier to apply in different contexts.

The Ideathon can also be adapted to **local needs, market conditions, and audiences**. Organisers may involve local women entrepreneurs, textile business owners, chambers of commerce, or SME representatives in order to introduce real-life challenges and connect the learning process with the local labour market. Company visits, mentoring sessions, and sponsorship by local actors can further increase the relevance of the experience and strengthen networking opportunities for participants.



Although the W4TEX Ideathon was originally designed for **women in the textile sector**, it can be transferred to other target groups as well. These may include young women in vocational training, adult women professionals seeking career development, women entrepreneurs launching sustainable businesses, or even mixed-gender groups, provided that a gender-sensitive facilitation approach is maintained. The model can also be applied in other sectors undergoing green transition, such as agri-food, crafts, manufacturing, or creative industries. In addition, the format has potential for adaptation within larger companies as an **intrapreneurship tool** to encourage internal innovation and women's leadership.



Its long-term transferability can be further supported through the introduction of **digital micro-credentials** to recognise learning outcomes, as well as through the creation of an **alumni mentorship model**, where former participants return as peer mentors or facilitators in future editions. The Ideathon can also be updated to address emerging topics, such as transparency, traceability, circularity, and textile waste management, ensuring that it remains relevant to current sectoral developments.

Overall, the W4TEX Ideathon is a **practical, flexible, and scalable model** that can be successfully replicated beyond the original partnership. Its structured methodology, combined with its adaptability, makes it a valuable tool for promoting women's leadership, entrepreneurship, collaboration, and sustainable innovation both within the textile sector and in other fields.



3. Training content & Lesson Plans

The W4TEX Ideathon is designed as a structured learning process that equips participants with the knowledge and analytical tools necessary for meaningful innovation. The training content forms the conceptual backbone of the Ideathon, ensuring that solution development is grounded in informed understanding rather than intuition alone.

The educational framework is organised around three thematic pillars:

- Fast fashion and its systemic implications
- Circularity in textile production and consumption
- Textile recycling and waste management

These topics reflect critical sustainability challenges within the textile sector while also highlighting opportunities for strategic transformation and leadership. By addressing environmental impact, business viability, and social responsibility together, the training supports a holistic perspective on sectoral change.

The learning sequence follows a progressive logic. Participants first explore key concepts and sectoral dynamics, then engage in critical reflection on market realities and sustainability trade-offs. This foundation enables them to approach the Ideathon challenges with analytical clarity and strategic awareness.

The lesson plans provided in this section offer structured guidance for trainers, including clear learning objectives, methodological suggestions, and step-by-step implementation flow. While ensuring consistency across implementations, they remain adaptable to different national and local contexts.

3.1 Topic 1: Fast fashion

The **fast fashion model** has become one of the main drivers of the environmental and social crisis in the textile industry. Production cycles that once followed seasonal rhythms of approximately one year have been reduced to a few weeks, and in the case of ultra-fast fashion, to as little as 5–7 days. At the same time, the average number of times a garment is worn has decreased by 36% in the last 15 years, reflecting a culture of disposability and overconsumption.

The environmental consequences of this accelerated system are severe. The textile industry accounts for approximately 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions and is the second-largest consumer of water worldwide. Massive volumes of textile waste are generated annually, much of which ends up in landfills or incineration facilities. Synthetic fibres release microplastics into marine ecosystems, while dyeing and finishing processes contribute to water contamination. The model's reliance on low-cost, blended fabrics further



complicates recycling efforts, reinforcing a linear “produce–consume–discard” pattern.

Beyond environmental degradation, **fast fashion also has profound social implications**. The pressure to minimise costs and accelerate production often leads to exploitative labour conditions in global supply chains. In some contexts, textile workers earn wages as low as €0.50 per hour. Women constitute the majority of garment workers globally, yet they remain underrepresented in decision-making positions within the industry. This creates a paradox in which women are central to production but excluded from strategic leadership.

Fast fashion operates on a business model designed for speed, affordability, and constant novelty. Brands rely on rapid trend replication, aggressive marketing strategies, and digital platforms to stimulate frequent purchasing. While this model has proven highly profitable, it externalises environmental and social costs, creating long-term systemic risks. Increasing consumer awareness and regulatory pressure are now challenging its sustainability and viability.

The European policy context is gradually reshaping the sector. Sustainability requirements under the EU Strategy for Sustainable Textiles, along with regulations such as the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR), the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), and extended producer responsibility frameworks, are pushing companies toward greater transparency, durability, and circularity. These developments signal a structural shift away from purely volume-based growth models toward more responsible production systems.

However, **transitioning away from fast fashion presents complex systemic challenges**. Consumer behaviour remains strongly influenced by low prices and rapid trend cycles. Although awareness of sustainability is increasing, purchasing habits often prioritise affordability and immediacy. Businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, face difficulties in competing with large-scale ultra-fast platforms that benefit from economies of scale and globalised supply chains optimised for cost efficiency.

Additional structural barriers include the high cost of sustainable materials, fragmented recycling infrastructure, limited supply chain transparency, and competitive market pressures. The dominance of fast fashion is deeply embedded in global trade systems, digital marketing ecosystems, and consumer culture. Addressing it therefore requires transformation at multiple interconnected levels.

Three levels of action are necessary to challenge and redesign the fast fashion paradigm. First, consumer awareness and behavioural change must be strengthened through education, transparency, and alternative value propositions that emphasise quality and longevity. Second, businesses must



innovate their models by integrating durability, repairability, circular design, and ethical sourcing into their strategies. Third, policy frameworks must create enabling conditions through regulation, incentives, and accountability mechanisms that reward sustainable practices.

The complexity of fast fashion lies not only in its environmental footprint but in its systemic integration into economic and cultural systems. The challenge is not merely to criticise the model, but to redesign it. Within the W4TEX Ideathon, participants were encouraged to explore solutions that combine creativity, feasibility, sustainability, and business impact. This approach positions women not only as observers of the system but as leaders capable of reshaping it.

3.2 Topic 2: Circularity

The textile industry causes a serious environmental crisis. Every year, 92 million tons of textile waste are generated globally, and 60% of clothing is discarded within the first year of purchase. In the European Union alone, each citizen generates approximately 16 kilograms of textile waste annually. Of this, only 4.4 kilograms are collected separately for reuse or recycling, while the remaining 11.6 kilograms end up in landfills or are incinerated. The environmental impact extends beyond waste. Textile production is responsible for 10% of global carbon dioxide emissions each year, and experts project this could reach 25% by 2050 if no action is taken. Furthermore, more than 35% of microplastics found in oceans come from synthetic textiles, releasing approximately 0.5 tons of microfibers into marine environments annually.

In response to these challenges, the concept of circularity offers an alternative to the traditional linear economy model of "resource extraction → production → distribution → consumption → waste." **Circularity envisions a closed-loop system** where materials are continuously reused, recycled, and reintegrated into the production cycle, minimising waste and reducing demand for raw materials. While Europe leads globally with a circularity rate of 12.2% in 2024, this figure also reveals that the vast majority of materials are still not cycled back into the economy, underscoring the scale of the transition required.

Shifting to a circular economy in textiles brings **significant opportunities for different stakeholders**. For businesses, embracing circular models can produce long-term brand growth, competitive advantage, increased customer loyalty, and alignment with evolving sustainability regulations. For the economy as a whole, the circular economy presents a major growth opportunity, with the potential to generate \$4.5 trillion globally by 2030 through activities such as repair, recycling, and remanufacturing. These labour-intensive processes also promise substantial social benefits, including the creation of millions of new jobs, particularly in developing countries. Environmentally, circularity offers a pathway to reduce waste, lower carbon emissions, and improve resource



efficiency. Women's leadership plays a key role in this transition, with research showing that women-led firms achieve higher environmental, social, and governance scores and are more likely to adopt environmentally friendly practices.

The European Union has established a **strong foundation to support the circular transition, including policies and financing mechanisms**. The EU Strategy for Sustainable Textiles sets the overall direction, supported by key regulations that textile companies must now comply with. These include the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR), the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), and the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD). Starting from 2024, the EU's Digital Product Passport regulation is also driving the transition, requiring businesses to provide detailed product information through unique identifiers such as RFID or QR codes. Together, these policies create a coherent regulatory framework pushing the textile industry toward circularity.

However, the path to circularity is still loaded with **systemic challenges that must be addressed at multiple levels**. A significant gap exists between leading countries such as the Netherlands, Italy, France, and Germany, and those transitioning more slowly, primarily in Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe, with some countries having circularity rates as low as 2%. This disparity raises questions about the achievability of EU targets by 2030, even with regulations established.

For small and medium-sized enterprises, which make up over 90% of the world's businesses and are crucial to a sustainable future due to their adaptability, several practical barriers emerge. These include the higher cost of eco-materials, the technical complexity of recycling materials, the logistical difficulty of organising the return of used clothing, the need for new infrastructure, and high initial investment costs.

Three interconnected levels require action to scale up solutions: consumer awareness and responsible purchasing, business response through implementing circular models and reducing material flows, and legislative incentives to create a favourable regulatory framework. The complexity of the **circular transition** lies not in a lack of solutions but in the challenge of **scaling them up comprehensively across these different levels**, requiring coordinated action from consumers, businesses, and policymakers alike.

3.3 Topic 3: Textile recycling & waste

Textile recycling and waste management have become central concerns in the transition toward a more sustainable and circular textile economy. The sector generates substantial volumes of waste each year, while only a limited share is collected and reintroduced into productive use. This imbalance



highlights the structural limitations of current linear production and consumption systems, where garments are often designed, used, and discarded with minimal consideration for end-of-life recovery.

Textile waste arises at multiple stages of the value chain. During manufacturing, offcuts, surplus materials, and defective products generate pre-consumer waste. After use, discarded garments form post-consumer waste, much of which ends up in landfill, incineration, or low-value export markets. Recycling seeks to recover materials and reintegrate them into production cycles; however, it remains constrained by technical, economic, and organisational barriers.

Material complexity is a key challenge. Blended fibres, mixed components, and chemical treatments complicate separation and fibre-to-fibre recycling processes. In parallel, limited sorting infrastructure and insufficient investment in advanced recycling technologies reduce efficiency. From an economic perspective, recycled fibres often struggle to compete with low-cost virgin materials, particularly within fast-fashion-driven markets. These constraints reveal that recycling cannot function effectively without systemic changes in design practices, supply chain coordination, and market incentives.

The implications extend beyond environmental impact. Textile waste contributes to carbon emissions, resource depletion, and microplastic pollution, while the export of used textiles can shift environmental and social burdens to vulnerable regions. SMEs frequently lack access to infrastructure, financial incentives, and technological support necessary to implement recycling solutions at scale.

Policy developments at European level, including circular textile strategies, extended producer responsibility mechanisms, and mandatory separate collection systems, are reshaping the regulatory landscape. These measures signal a **transition from voluntary sustainability efforts toward structured accountability across the value chain.**

Within the W4TEX Ideathon, textile recycling is framed not merely as waste management but as an innovation and leadership challenge. Participants are invited to explore how textile-to-textile recycling, creative upcycling, industrial symbiosis, and new business models can convert waste into value. By adopting a systems perspective, they examine how managerial decisions, collaboration, and strategic planning can reduce waste generation while strengthening competitiveness and social responsibility.

In this way, textile recycling becomes a platform for developing analytical capacity, entrepreneurial thinking, and leadership engagement in the circular transformation of the textile sector.



3.4 Lesson plans

3.4.1 Lesson plan for the topic of fast fashion

1. Session title

Understanding and challenging fast fashion

2. Duration

The session requires 90 minutes in total. The session follows a three-part structure: an interactive introduction and lecture (30 minutes), a practical group activity (30 minutes) and a guided discussion with wrap-up (30 minutes).

3. Target group

This session is designed for women working in the textile sector, including designers, production managers, entrepreneurs, retail professionals, sustainability staff, and aspiring leaders.

Participants may have different levels of knowledge about sustainability and business models. The session works well with mixed-experience groups, as participants can bring both practical and strategic perspectives to the discussion.

4. Learning Objectives & expected outcomes

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

Knowledge

- Explain the concept and characteristics of the fast fashion model.
- Identify its environmental, social, and economic impacts.
- Describe the systemic drivers that sustain fast fashion (consumer behaviour, supply chains, pricing strategies, digital acceleration).
- Recognise emerging regulatory and market pressures affecting the model.

Skills

- Analyse a real fast fashion challenge using structured problem-definition tools.
- Generate innovative alternatives that balance creativity and feasibility.
- Apply critical thinking to evaluate sustainability trade-offs.
- Communicate a structured solution clearly and persuasively.

Competences

- Demonstrate collaborative leadership in team-based problem-solving.
- Adopt a systems-thinking mindset when addressing sustainability issues.
- Position themselves as change agents capable of influencing business models.



- Strengthen confidence in strategic decision-making and public speaking.

5. Key concepts / Theoretical input

Core concepts to cover include:

- **Definition of fast fashion:** a high-speed, high-volume model based on producing cheap, trend-driven clothing with rapid turnover.
- **Acceleration of production cycles:** shift from traditional cycles (around one year) to fast fashion (weeks) and **ultra-fast fashion (5–7 days)**.
- **Overconsumption and disposability:** garments are used fewer times; the training highlights a **36% decrease in garment use over the last 15 years**.
- **Environmental impacts:**
 - high resource use and pollution across production (fibres, dyeing, washing, drying)
 - textile waste generation at scale (linked to low quality and short garment lifespans)
 - microfibre and plastic pollution linked to synthetic textiles
- **Social impacts:** labour exploitation and low wages in global supply chains (training example: **€0.50/hour** in some contexts).
- **Why the model persists:** affordability, trend culture, digital marketing, and supply-chain structures that reward speed and low cost.
- **Alternative directions** (introduced briefly to frame the ideation task): slow fashion (quality, longevity), transparency, ethical sourcing, new business models that reduce overproduction while remaining attractive and accessible.

6. Training methodology

The session should use a mix of teaching methods to keep participants engaged and support learning by doing. An interactive lecture introduces the fast fashion model and its impacts while encouraging questions and discussion. A practical group activity allows participants to analyse a real challenge and generate alternative solutions collaboratively. The session ends with a guided discussion and reflection to consolidate learning and connect the topic to participants' work contexts. This combination helps participants understand fast fashion as a systemic issue and feel capable of proposing and communicating realistic alternatives.

7. Step-by-Step activity flow

Part 1: Introduction + Theoretical Input (30 minutes)

The facilitator welcomes participants and introduces the topic. To activate prior knowledge, the facilitator asks: “What does fast fashion mean to you?” Participants share examples from their own experience (as consumers, workers, entrepreneurs). The facilitator captures key ideas visually (flipchart or



digital board). Then, using slides, the facilitator presents the key concepts listed above (definition, impacts, why it persists, and alternative directions). The facilitator pauses for brief questions and comments to keep engagement high and link the content to participants' realities.

Part 2: Group Activity (30 minutes)

Participants are divided into groups of 3–4. Each group selects a fast fashion–related challenge (e.g., consumer education, transparency about real costs, balancing low prices with fair labour, reducing overconsumption while staying competitive).

Groups work through three stages:

- **A – Problem framing:** identify root causes, who is affected, and key impacts
- **B – Idea generation:** produce as many ideas as possible without judging them
- **C – Select + structure:** choose one idea and outline problem → solution → impact → why realistic

Each group presents in 1–2 minutes. The facilitator encourages supportive peer feedback.

Part 3: Reflection + Wrap-up (30 minutes)

The facilitator leads a discussion: what did we learn about the system behind fast fashion? What makes change difficult? Where can women lead change in organisations or communities? The session ends with a **3-2-1 reflection** (3 learnings, 2 applications, 1 question). The facilitator summarises the key takeaways and thanks participants.

8. Materials & resources

Laptop with slides, projector/screen, flipchart or digital collaboration tool (Miro/Jamboard/Mural), sticky notes and markers, timer, optional printed challenge prompts/templates.

9. Assessment & evaluation

The facilitator observes collaboration and participation during group work, how well participants apply the concepts in their challenge analysis, and the clarity of short presentations. The 3-2-1 reflection provides quick evidence of learning and remaining needs.

3.4.2 Lesson plan for the topic of circularity in textiles

1. Session title: “Circularity in Textiles”

2. Duration



The session requires 90 minutes in total. The session follows a three-part structure: an interactive lecture (30 minutes), a practical exercise (30 minutes) and a guided discussion with wrap-up (30 minutes).

3. Target group

This session is designed for women working in the textile sector, including fashion designers, production managers, business owners, sustainability staff, and those who want to take on more leadership roles. Participants may have different levels of knowledge about the circular economy, from beginners to those already using sustainable practices. The activities work well for groups with mixed experience, as participants can learn from each other.



4. Learning objectives & expected outcomes

By the end of the session, participants will be able to explain what the circular economy means and how it differs from the traditional linear model of take-make-dispose. They will understand the main environmental, economic, and social effects of moving toward circularity in textiles and recognise the challenges that make this transition difficult, especially for small and medium-sized companies.

In terms of skills, participants will learn to examine a product's life cycle and find ways to make it more circular. They will apply circular principles to redesign a product, work well in teams to develop creative solutions, and present their ideas clearly to others.

5. Training methodology

This session uses **a mix of teaching methods** to keep participants engaged and help them learn by doing. An **interactive lecture** presents the main ideas while encouraging questions and short discussions. A **practical group activity** lets participants apply circular concepts to a real design problem, learning through experience. The session ends with **a guided discussion** where participants reflect on what they have learned and think about how to use it in their own work. This combination helps participants not only understand circularity but also feel ready to put it into practice.

6. Step-by-Step activity flow

Part 1: Introduction to the topic (10 minutes)

The facilitator welcomes everyone and introduces the session topic. To get started, the facilitator asks, "What does circularity mean to you?" Participants



share their thoughts and any experiences they have with recycling, reusing, or sustainability in their work. Using a digital collaboration tool such as Miro, Jamboard, or Mural, the facilitator captures key words and ideas on a shared screen, creating a visual map of what the group already knows. This gets everyone involved right away and helps the facilitator understand the group's starting point.

Part 2: Theoretical input (20 minutes)

The facilitator presents theoretical information related to the topic. Using slides, the facilitator explains the difference between linear and circular economies, shares key facts about Europe's circularity rate and the economic potential of circularity, and describes the challenges facing small and medium-sized businesses. The facilitator also explains the three levels where action is needed: consumer awareness, business response, and government support. Throughout the presentation, the facilitator pauses to ask for questions and comments, keeping participants engaged and helping them connect the information to their own experiences. The facilitator highlights the important role of women leaders in driving circular change, using research findings to encourage and motivate participants.

Part 3: Group activity (30 minutes)

Participants are divided into small groups of three or four. The facilitator explains the task: redesign an everyday product using circular-economy principles, working through three structured stages. Each group chooses any object they can see in the room. In the first stage (Point A – Current State), they explore how the product is normally made, what materials it is made of, how it is used, and where it ends up when discarded. In the second stage (Point B – Future State), they imagine a circular version of this product. They rethink its design, materials, and lifespan, considering how to make it last longer, be easily repaired, or have its components fully recycled at the end of use. In the third stage (Point C – Transition Plan), they identify what would need to change to turn their circular vision into reality. This could include different materials, new production methods, collection systems for take-back, or partnerships with recycling facilities. The facilitator moves between groups, offering help, asking questions, and ensuring everyone takes part. This activity lets participants immediately apply what they have learned in a creative and low-pressure environment.

Then each group presents its redesigned product in one to two minutes. The facilitator creates a supportive atmosphere where all ideas are welcomed and valued. After each presentation, the facilitator may invite one brief question or comment from other participants, encouraging everyone to learn from each other's ideas. The range of products and solutions shows how circular thinking can apply to many different things.



Part 4: Reflection + wrap-up discussion (20 minutes)

After the presentations, the facilitator leads a group discussion using questions that encourage reflection. The **3-2-1 reflection method** works well for this. At the end of the session, each participant writes down three new things they learned about circularity, two ways they could use circular thinking in their work, and one question they still have. These reflections can be displayed on digital tools like Slido. They provide the facilitator with valuable information about what participants learned and which topics may need more attention in future sessions.

Part 6: Wrap-up and assessment (10 minutes)

The facilitator sums up the main learning points from the session and thanks participants for their ideas and energy. Participants then take a few minutes to complete a short reflection activity that helps them think about what they have learned and gives the facilitator useful feedback.

7. Materials & resources

To run this session, the facilitator will need a laptop with the presentation slides and a projector or screen for display. For group activities, digital collaboration tools such as Miro, Jamboard, or Mural can be used instead of physical materials like flip chart paper and markers. A timer will help keep activities on schedule, and sticky notes can support brainstorming and reflection exercises. Name tags for participants are optional, but can help with networking, particularly if the group is large or participants do not know each other in advance. The room should be set up so that chairs and tables can be moved easily, allowing for both presentations and group work.

8. Assessment & evaluation

Throughout the session, the facilitator observes how groups work together, who participates, and how well participants apply the ideas they have learned. During presentations and discussions, the facilitator notices the range and quality of ideas shared. The comments participants make during the guided discussion show whether they can connect circular concepts to bigger issues and to their own work situations. These assessment methods are simple, stress-free, and well-suited to adult learning, ensuring evaluation helps rather than worries participants while giving the facilitator useful insights for improving future sessions.

3.4.3 Lesson plan for the topic of textile recycling and waste

1. Session title

Textile Recycling & Waste: Turning Waste into Worth

2. Duration



150 minutes

- 30 min – Conceptual input
- 20 min – Guided discussion
- 60 min – Team challenge work
- 25 min – Pitch preparation
- 15 min – Reflection

3. Target group

Women professionals, aspiring managers, SME representatives, textile designers, and adult learners involved in the textile value chain.

4. Learning Objectives & expected outcomes

This session is designed to provide participants with a structured understanding of textile recycling and waste while strengthening their analytical, strategic, and collaborative capacities. The learning objectives combine knowledge acquisition with practical skill development and competence-building, ensuring that participants are able to translate sustainability concepts into actionable business and leadership decisions.

By the end of the session, participants will be able to describe current textile waste flows in Europe and explain the structural barriers that limit effective recycling, including material complexity, infrastructure gaps, and economic disincentives. They will understand how recent European regulatory developments influence the sector and shape new responsibilities for producers and stakeholders. Participants will be capable of analysing the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of textile waste and of developing structured solutions that respond to feasibility and sustainability criteria. They will also be able to prepare and deliver a concise and persuasive pitch that clearly presents a problem, a proposed solution, and its expected impact. At a competence level, participants will apply systems thinking to textile waste challenges, integrate sustainability considerations into strategic business reasoning, and collaborate effectively within diverse teams, demonstrating confidence and shared responsibility in the ideation process.

5. Key concepts / Theoretical input

The session introduces textile recycling and waste within the broader transition from linear to circular production systems. Participants examine the scale of textile waste generation in Europe and the imbalance between production, consumption, and recovery, recognising why textile waste has become a critical sustainability challenge.

The theoretical input explores structural barriers to effective recycling, including material complexity, limited sorting and recycling infrastructure, and weak economic incentives. Emphasis is placed on how blended fibres, insufficient



recovery systems, and cost-driven markets restrict large-scale fibre-to-fibre recycling. These constraints demonstrate that recycling requires systemic changes in product design, supply chain coordination, and business models.

Environmental, social, and economic dimensions are considered together. Textile waste contributes to resource loss, emissions, and microplastic pollution, while global waste exports raise governance concerns. The evolving European regulatory framework further highlights increasing accountability and the need for innovation. Overall, textile recycling is presented not merely as waste management, but as a strategic opportunity for leadership and circular transformation within the textile sector.

6. Training methodology

The session combines concise theoretical input with structured collaborative work. After introducing the key concepts related to textile recycling and waste, participants engage in guided reflection to connect the topic with their own professional experience. The learning process then shifts to teamwork, where participants analyse a selected challenge and explore possible solutions.

Working in small groups with assigned roles, participants define the problem, examine its environmental, social, and economic dimensions, and generate alternative responses. Proposed ideas are evaluated according to feasibility, sustainability, and business impact before teams refine their concept and prepare a short, structured pitch.

The facilitator supports the process by ensuring clarity of objectives, balanced participation, and effective time management. The session concludes with a collective reflection, enabling participants to consolidate insights and relate their learning to real-world action.

7. Step-by-Step activity flow

Step 1 – Introduction (30 min)

Presentation of key facts, structural barriers, and EU policy context.

Step 2 – Guided Discussion (20 min)

Reflection questions

- How can women lead the shift toward textile recycling?
- Which local partnerships could turn waste into opportunity?

Step 3 – Team Challenge (60 min)

Teams define their selected challenge and analyse:

- Environmental impact
- Social implications
- Economic feasibility



They generate alternative solutions and evaluate them according to creativity, feasibility, sustainability, and business impact.

Step 4 – Pitch Preparation (25 min)

Teams structure their pitch following the recommended format (p.18):

- Problem
- Solution
- Benefits
- Impact
- Call to Action

They apply presentation tips.

Step 5 – Reflection (15 min)

Plenary reflection:

- What new insight did you gain?
- What small step could you take in practice?

8. Materials & resources

- Presentation slides (from training content)
- Printed challenge templates
- Evaluation scorecards
- Flipcharts / markers
- Timer for pitch preparation

9. Assessment & evaluation

Assessment within this session focuses on the quality of participants' analytical reasoning, collaboration, and strategic thinking rather than on technical perfection. Evaluation is based on the extent to which teams demonstrate a clear understanding of the textile waste challenge, propose feasible and sustainability-oriented solutions, and articulate their ideas in a structured and persuasive manner.

During the pitching phase, proposals are assessed according to their creativity, practical feasibility, sustainability impact, business relevance, and clarity of presentation. Feedback from facilitators and, where applicable, expert panel members supports constructive learning rather than competition. The evaluation process encourages participants to reflect on the strengths and limitations of their ideas and to consider how their proposals could be further developed or implemented in real contexts.

The session concludes with a guided reflection, allowing participants to identify key insights gained, recognise how teamwork influenced their thinking, and



define potential actions they could apply in their professional or community environments. In this way, assessment serves both as a measurement tool and as a learning reinforcement mechanism.



4. Facilitation styles & methods

The facilitation approach of the W4TEX Ideathon is based on **learner-centered** and **empowerment-driven principles**. Facilitators act primarily as guides and moderators rather than lecturers, creating a structured yet supportive environment in which participants feel confident to contribute ideas, question assumptions, and engage actively in discussion.

Clarity of objectives and time management are essential throughout the process. Facilitators ensure that each **phase of the Ideathon** –problem analysis, ideation, evaluation, and pitching– progresses **logically and efficiently**. Clear instructions and timely guidance help teams balance creativity with feasibility and maintain focus on outcomes.

Managing group dynamics requires attentiveness to participation patterns. Facilitators encourage equitable contribution, support quieter participants, and guide more dominant voices toward constructive engagement. Maintaining a psychologically safe atmosphere is particularly important during presentation phases, where participants share their ideas publicly.

Critical thinking is stimulated through open-ended questions and reflective dialogue. Rather than providing solutions, facilitators prompt participants to examine root causes, long-term impact, and practical constraints. Alternating between plenary discussions, teamwork, and reflection helps sustain energy and deepen learning.

Overall, effective facilitation within W4TEX ensures that sustainability challenges are addressed through structured collaboration, analytical depth, and leadership development in an inclusive and motivating environment.

4.1 Facilitation tips

The role of facilitators in the W4TEX Ideathon approach includes several ways in which participants should be guided, supported, and encouraged to achieve deeper learning and skills development.

a) The role of the facilitator as guide, moderator, and enabler rather than lecturer

While the Ideathon approach can involve some lecturing, to provide targeted skills development, the main role of the facilitators is as guides and enablers of the learning process. It is important to introduce topics or tasks and then give the learners space to interact and co-create their experience together. Then guidance should be provided to support at key stages of the group collaboration. When supporting the groups individually, moderation can be necessary to resolve different perspectives. Within the whole group, moderation is needed to confirm and build on discussion points.



b) Techniques for managing dominant or disengaged participants

With smaller groups (3 members) there is not a high risk of disengaged participants, especially where there is time commitments associated with the approach. There is a slightly higher but rather minor risk of dominant participants with this structure. Both types of challenges can be supported by periodic interventions or activities distributed throughout the groupwork, which can encourage balanced involvement within the group. This can be a way to provide structure to the task outputs with targeted topics to address/improve.

c) Methods for stimulating critical thinking and constructive dialogue

The same periodic interventions or activities are key moments to encourage participants to balance their own thinking with building on and reflecting on the thinking of their peers. Within the Ideathon approach, it is important to balance the types of learning experiences – and if possible, the peers they are co-creating knowledge with. This can be achieved by, for instance, having discussions with existing group members and other constellations of participants, and then applying those experiences to collaborating with new group members in a constructive way.

d) Approaches for balancing content delivery with interaction

In line with the focus on being learner-centered and empowerment-driven, the balance between content delivery and interaction should involve a more significant proportion of engagement. This means carefully designing sessions to alternate between guidance and freedom, with aims to ensure both flexibility and structure of thinking and planning, as well as inspire innovativeness in general.

e) Time management strategies during ideation and pitching sessions

This balance between freedom and structure, relates to one of the more challenging tasks, which is managing the time for working and pitching. With shorter events, the time pressure may reduce time for restful breaks; instead, networking and other tasks can be integrated into non-working time. In longer events, the agenda should be designed in such a way to balance effort attention and longer breaks as relaxed networking sessions.

f) Strategies to maintain energy and focus during intensive collaborative sessions

Whenever possible, breaks should be used to refresh the participants and provide them with opportunities to interact with their peers and mentors outside of the structured work time. This can encourage reflection on one's own work in the task as well as more general insights to consider. It is crucial to provide these moments to facilitate connections and knowledge sharing among the participants.



4.2 Participants' engagement tips

a) Icebreakers and energisers to build trust and group cohesion

Building a "psychologically safe space" is essential, especially for women who may face confidence gaps in professional leadership settings. Some examples include:

The "Textile Journey" Sharing: Inspired by the Ukrainian Ideathon, begin by having participants share their personal or professional connection to textiles. This creates a sense of unity and shared purpose from the start.

Low-Risk Creative Warm-ups: Before tackling complex sustainability challenges, use quick, "low-stakes" activities like the "10 Uses for a Textile Scrap" to normalize experimentation and reduce the fear of judgment

The "Energy Barometer": During intensive collaborative sessions, use brief physical energizers (e.g., a 2-minute "stand-up and stretch" or "rhythm clap") to maintain focus and mental clarity

b) Techniques for encouraging equal participation in group work

Dominance patterns can often silence quieter voices, particularly in mixed-experience groups. Strategies:

Structured Role Rotation: Beyond assigning initial roles (Coordinator, Researcher, Creative, etc.), encourage teams to rotate the "lead" for different phases of the Ideathon (e.g., one person leads the problem-framing, another the ideation).

Prompting Quieter Voices: Facilitators should actively monitor groups and use gentle prompts like, *"We've heard some great points from the production side; I'd love to hear the creative perspective on this"*

In some cases, the use of "Participation Tokens": In group discussions, give each member three "tokens." Each time they speak, they must use a token. Once their tokens are gone, they must wait until everyone else has contributed before speaking again.

c) Structured brainstorming methods (e.g., round-robin, silent ideation)

To maximize creativity, the quantity of ideas must be prioritized over immediate quality:

Before any group discussion, give participants 5 minutes of silence to write down at least 5 individual ideas on sticky notes to prevent "groupthink" and in order to help introverted participants. Once silent ideation is complete, each team member presents one idea at a time in a circle. No feedback or judgment is allowed until every idea has been shared. When discussing ideas, enforce a rule where participants must start their feedback with "Yes, and..." rather than "No" or "But," building upon the previous speaker's contribution to foster a culture of additive innovation



d) Encouraging peer feedback and cross-team dialogue

The Ideathon benefits from the collective intelligence of all participants, not just those within a single team:

Mid-way through the ideation phase, have teams display their "Data Collection" templates or initial concepts on the wall. One member stays to explain the idea while others "walk" to different teams to provide one "I like..." and one "I wonder if..." feedback point.

Pair a team focused on *Circular Economy* with one focused on *Textile Waste* for a 10-minute exchange. This encourages a systemic understanding of the industry and exposes participants to different professional perspectives

e) Creating ownership of ideas through shared responsibility,

The "Team Manifesto": At the start of the teamwork phase, have each group co-sign a brief "Team Manifesto" defining how they will make decisions and share leadership. **Distributed Pitching:** While a team may choose one main presenter for the 3-minute pitch, mandate that *all* members must participate in answering the jury's questions. This reinforces the idea that the final solution is a collective achievement

Role Personalization: Encourage participants to align their team roles with their professional aspirations (e.g., a designer taking the lead on the sustainability model) to increase their personal investment in the outcome

f) Strategies to connect theoretical input with participants' professional realities.

The "Reality Check" Pause: Following theoretical lectures on topics like *Fast Fashion* or *Circularity*, ask participants to identify one way this concept mirrors a challenge they face in their current job

Involving Real Stakeholders: As demonstrated in the Italian Ideathon, bring in local female entrepreneurs to present real-life business challenges for teams to solve

3-2-1 Reflection: Conclude sessions by asking participants to list 3 things they learned, 2 things they can apply to their work tomorrow, and 1 question they still have

4.3 Inclusion tips

Inclusive facilitation requires deliberate design and active moderation. The following recommendations support the creation of psychologically safe, gender-sensitive, and accessible learning environments that enable meaningful ideathon participation.

Gender-sensitive communication practices



Facilitators should use inclusive, non-assumptive language and avoid reinforcing stereotypes about roles, skills, or confidence levels. Awareness of subtle bias in tone, expectations, and feedback helps ensure that no participant is positioned as more or less capable based on gender, background, or communication style.

Implementation tips:

- Avoid assigning technical or leadership tasks based on assumptions.
- Provide specific, balanced feedback focused on ideas and effort rather than personality traits (e.g., avoid labeling women as “emotional” while praising men as “strategic”).

Ensure space for different leadership styles and voices

Participants will demonstrate varied leadership and communication styles. Leadership may be collaborative, quiet, facilitative, or strategic—not only outspoken. Process roles (time-keeping, synthesis, listening) should be valued equally to presentation roles. Facilitators should actively manage interruption and dominance patterns.

Implementation tips:

- Encourage teams to assign diverse roles (coordinator, researcher, creative, presenter, timekeeper).
- Rotate spokespersons and use round-robin speaking during key discussions; prompt quieter voices when needed.
- Include brief written reflection or small-group discussion before sharing.
- Acknowledge diverse leadership contributions during debriefs, not only assertive speakers.

Address confidence gaps and imposter syndrome

Confidence gaps—particularly among women and early-career participants—are common and structural. Facilitators should create psychologically safe spaces where experimentation and uncertainty are normalised as part of creative problem-solving.

Implementation tips:

- Begin with low-risk activities before complex tasks.
- Use team-based ideation to reduce individual pressure.
- Share brief examples of learning through doubt or iteration.
- Emphasise progress and learning over perfection or competition.
- Reframe hesitant contributions positively (“This is a useful starting point...”).

Accommodate diverse learning preferences and backgrounds



Participants vary in learning styles (visual, verbal, experiential, reflective) and in cultural or professional communication norms. Facilitation should combine multiple formats to ensure accessibility and engagement.

Implementation tips:

- Combine short inputs with hands-on exercises, reflection, and discussion.
- Use visual templates and written prompts alongside verbal explanations.
- Provide instructions both orally and in writing.
- Minimise jargon and clarify technical terms when needed.

Support participants with different levels of professional experience

The ideathon benefits from mixed experience levels. Diversity of experience should be treated as an asset rather than a hierarchy.

Implementation tips:

- Form mixed-experience teams intentionally.
- Encourage experienced participants to mentor without dominating.
- Invite less-experienced participants to lead creative phases.
- Frame challenges as open problems without a single expert solution.

Ensure accessibility in physical and hybrid environments

Accessibility is a core principle of inclusive facilitation. Facilitators should anticipate physical, sensory, technological, and time-related barriers.

Implementation tips:

- Select accessible venues (step-free access, adequate lighting, flexible seating).
- Use microphones where necessary and speak clearly.
- Allow regular breaks and flexible pacing.
- In hybrid settings, ensure clear audio, shared digital workspaces, and equal facilitation of online participants.
- Share materials in advance where possible.



5. Training resources

The implementation of the W4TEX Ideathon is supported by a set of structured and practical training resources designed to ensure consistency, clarity, and effective learning outcomes across contexts.

The core resources include the thematic presentation materials developed for the Ideathon, which provide participants with **key data, conceptual explanations, and scenario-based challenges related to fast fashion, circularity, and textile recycling and waste**. These materials establish the analytical foundation necessary for informed problem-solving and solution design.

A central component of the learning process is the use of structured ideathon templates. These include worksheets for problem definition and data collection, guided **brainstorming sheets** for idea generation, evaluation matrices for comparing alternatives, and concept development forms to refine selected solutions. The templates ensure that teams follow a logical progression from understanding the challenge to developing a feasible and sustainability-oriented proposal.

During the pitching phase, evaluation scorecards are used to assess proposals according to predefined criteria such as **creativity, feasibility, sustainability impact, business relevance, and presentation quality**. These tools promote transparency, critical thinking, and structured feedback.

Additional facilitation materials, including flipcharts, markers, sticky notes, presentation equipment, and timing tools, support interactive teamwork and efficient session management. Where possible, examples from local companies, case discussions, or insights from study visits can be incorporated to connect theoretical discussion with real operational realities.

Finally, reflection prompts integrated at the end of the Ideathon serve as a learning reinforcement mechanism, encouraging participants to consolidate insights, evaluate team collaboration, and identify the next practical steps.

Together, these resources create a coherent and adaptable training framework that supports analytical depth, collaborative innovation, and leadership development within the W4TEX Ideathon model.



6. Ideathons insights, testimonials & visual gallery

6.1 National ideathon insights

6.1.1 Sweden



The Swedish National Ideathon was hosted at The Swedish School of Textiles in Borås on the 1st of December 2025. It was a full-day event that engaged 26 women and one man from diverse backgrounds within the textile field and diverse international perspectives. The event began with coffee and an ice-breaking activity. The Swedish project partners introduced the W4TEX project and the learning materials. Followed by this, the assigned task was introduced which included the challenges that the participants were supposed to address during the event. As described, the challenges were focusing on circularity, fast fashion, textile waste, and recycling. The participants were additionally introduced to the agenda of the day, including the information on idea pitch session and evaluation criteria.

The participating groups began their brainstorming session with support from mentors and an inspiring session with a guest lecture – a women entrepreneur within the textile industry who shared her journey and offered support. The day continued with lunch and preparation for the pitching session.



The key themes focused on bridging current gaps within the textile industry, with a strong emphasis on various aspects of circularity. Themes that emerged during the day were scaling circularity models, providing enhanced guides to consumers, and communication and marketing perspectives.

Among the innovative solutions proposed were, for example, a seamstress network to better utilize skills and skilled workers.

One participant reflected on how the “presentations, collaborative group work mentoring, and competitive pitching, created a comprehensive and practical learning environment.” Additionally, the participants “gained a deeper understanding of circular business models, textile sustainability strategies, and the broader dimensions of sustainable innovation.” One participant noted that the “tutoring from the W4TEX team supported idea development, while guest speakers reinforced applied learning and perspectives on entrepreneurship and women’s empowerment.” This allowed them to more fully realize their solution, which aimed to address industry and consumer gaps to scaling circular practices – and ended up the highest scoring group.

A primary challenge identified during the session was delivering a final pitch, as the assigned tasks were highly demanding to complete within such a limited timeframe. Nonetheless, the format provided a valuable opportunity for participants to practice and refine this skill.

Overall, the Swedish national ideathon provided a good structure to practice teamwork, identify areas and work with women empowering in the textile sector, and spark innovation and bring learnings to their professions. Additionally, the ideathon provided an opportunity for networking, creating possibilities for future collaborations.

6.1.2 Greece





The Greek National Ideathon was organised in Larissa and implemented as a two-day structured workshop (December 18-19, 2025), combining training, teamwork, and pitching activities. The event brought together women professionals, aspiring entrepreneurs, and stakeholders from the textile and sustainability ecosystem to address real challenges related to fast fashion, circularity, and textile waste.

Participants represented diverse backgrounds, including SME representatives, designers, sustainability-oriented professionals, and adult learners with interest in green transition. This diversity strengthened the quality of discussion and enabled the exchange of complementary perspectives during team-based ideation.

Key themes emerging during the ideathon focused on the gap between regulatory ambition and practical implementation, limited local recycling infrastructure, and the need for stronger collaboration between SMEs, municipalities, and innovation actors. Participants showed particular interest in business models that combine environmental responsibility with economic viability, including textile-to-textile recycling, upcycling initiatives, and community-based collection systems.

The ideas developed emphasised feasibility and local relevance. Teams proposed solutions aimed at improving waste collection mechanisms, strengthening partnerships between producers and recyclers, and raising consumer awareness through targeted campaigns. Several proposals highlighted the importance of women-led initiatives in driving circular transformation at local level.

The impact observed on participants was significant. Teamwork activities enhanced confidence and leadership engagement, particularly among women with limited prior pitching experience. The structured ideathon process supported analytical thinking and helped participants translate sustainability concerns into strategic proposals. The event also facilitated networking between professionals and stakeholders, laying the groundwork for potential future collaborations.

Overall, the Greek Ideathon demonstrated that structured facilitation, real-world challenges, and collaborative learning can effectively empower women to take active roles in shaping the sustainable transformation of the textile sector.

6.1.3 Spain

The Spanish National Ideathon was held on October 29th in Valencia at the “Ciudad del Aprendiz” vocational training centre, as part of the W4TEX – Women for a Sustainable Textile Future project. The event was done 3 times, the first according the format agreed in the consortium, and other two reduced formats took place embedded into the regular curriculum of textile-related



vocational programmes, transforming the Ideathon into an integrated educational activity rather than a standalone event.



The event engaged more than 60 young women between the ages of 18 and 25, most of them enrolled in textile-related vocational training pathways. Participants represented young professionals and future professionals in areas such as fashion design, garment production for shows, and technical textile studies. They all demonstrated strong interest in sustainability, innovation, and responsible business approaches, reflecting the growing awareness of environmental and social challenges among the next generation of textile professionals.



During the ideation phase, key themes emerged around fast fashion, textile waste, transparency, and circular design. Many participants focused on improving consumer awareness and making sustainability more visible and accessible. Transparency in pricing, ethical production, and responsible consumption were recurrent concerns, alongside the need to reduce overproduction and promote reuse and community engagement. The discussions revealed a clear desire to move beyond criticism of fast fashion toward practical and locally relevant alternatives.



The ideas developed combined creativity with social responsibility and entrepreneurial thinking. Circular fashion initiatives such as *Miciela* and *Two Life* proposed upcycling and redesigning used garments into new collections. Tools like *Preciosostenible* and *Etiquetas Justas* aimed to reveal the real environmental and social cost of clothing through transparent pricing and SDG-based labelling. Educational projects such as *Slow Fashion*, *Entrelazo*, and *Kits Creativos* promoted workshops and DIY approaches using textile scraps, while digital concepts like *Reversed Fashion* and *Barbie Project* explored mobile applications for clothing exchange and sustainable purchasing decisions.



The observed impact on participants was highly positive. The Ideathon strengthened collaboration, critical thinking, and eco-entrepreneurship skills while increasing participants' confidence in presenting and defending their ideas. Many demonstrated greater awareness of sustainability challenges and a stronger sense of responsibility toward shaping the future of the textile sector. The experience highlighted the transformative potential of lifelong education in empowering young women to become innovators and leaders in the green transition of the textile industry.



6.1.4 Italy



The Italian National Ideathon was held as an evening event at Lottozero in Prato and conducted in Italian. The event brought together participants from diverse backgrounds to collaboratively address real sustainability challenges in the fashion and textile sector. The format combined short inspirational talks by female entrepreneurs with structured team-based ideation, encouraging practical problem-solving and exchange.

A total of 29 participants took part, including local business owners, students, community members, aspiring entrepreneurs, experienced textile professionals, and representatives from CNA Toscana. Most participants were based in Italy, with additional international perspectives from individuals originally from the USA, England, and Serbia who are currently living in Italy.

Key themes emerged around the difficulty of communicating sustainability in an overcrowded digital environment, where algorithm-driven marketing often feels unauthentic. Participants also showed strong interest in understanding which



business models are enabling sustainable brands to remain competitive and financially viable.

The ideas developed focused on improving sustainability communication and engagement across generations. Proposals included using the material origins of products—such as shoes made from bioplastics and food waste—as a central storytelling tool, and creating a printed magazine co-produced by multiple sustainable brands to reach younger audiences seeking alternatives to digital content.

Some practical challenges were identified during implementation. The absence of computers made it difficult to structure and follow pitch presentations without visual support. For future editions, it is recommended that participants have access to computers to create simple presentations.

The impact on participants was clearly positive. Teamwork and hands-on ideation increased confidence and leadership engagement, while direct interaction with female entrepreneurs enhanced motivation and learning. Working on real business challenges and receiving immediate feedback fostered a strong sense of meaningful collaboration. The entrepreneurs valued the quality of ideas and the fresh perspectives brought by participants from different backgrounds.

Stakeholder involvement was a key strength of the event. Three Italian women entrepreneurs presented their companies and real-life challenges related to fast fashion, circularity, and textile waste and recycling. The ideathon was also unofficially supported by CNA Artigiani Imprenditori d'Italia Toscana, which promoted and attended the event, reinforcing its credibility within the local ecosystem.

6.1.5 Belgium



The Belgian National Ideathon was held on January 15, 2026, at the headquarters of the Official Spanish Chamber of Commerce in Belgium and Luxembourg in Brussels. The event gathered 63 participants, primarily talented



women from the textile sector, as well as entrepreneurs and professionals from other sectors, facilitating peer learning and mutual inspiration across different maturity levels of business development. It was structured in two main parts:



It began with a policy-oriented breakfast debate featuring Elisa Roller from the European Commission, focused on the Clean Industrial Pact and industrial transition, highlighting the need for strategic autonomy for different sectors, such as the textile sector. The day was followed by a practical, interactive workshop where teams developed and presented solutions to specific textile sustainability challenges.



Discussions and ideation focused on the structural shift toward cleaner business models. Key themes included, eco-design practices and sustainable fashion, the environmental and social impacts of fast fashion. During the implementation phase, a primary challenge identified was reconciling decarbonization goals with economic competitiveness, particularly given the barrier of high energy prices in Europe. Facilitators also noted the complexity of translating high-level EU policy perspectives—such as strategic autonomy



and trade tools—into immediately applicable business strategies for small and medium-sized women-led enterprises.

The winning project among the ones presented by the participants was "From Waste to Worth", a concept centered on Sustainable Consumption Innovation. This project proposed a circular business model to transform underutilized or discarded materials into high-value, traceable, and market-ready products. It stood out for its integrated approach to circular material valorization, clear target market definition, and a revenue structure aligned with premium sustainable positioning.

The ideathon had a significant positive impact on participants' leadership engagement and sustainability awareness. Attendees demonstrated a strong interest in the W4TEX digital learning platform. The collaborative environment fostered new professional contacts, increased confidence in navigating evolving regulatory frameworks, and empowered women to act as change agents in the green transition.

6.1.6 Ukraine



On December 6, 2025, Civitta Ukraine hosted the W4TEX National Ideathon in Kyiv, bringing together 20 women from the textile sector for a full day of collaborative problem-solving. Participants came from different parts of Ukraine, with some travelling for 10 to 12 hours to reach Kyiv. The group included fashion designers, consultants, stylists, entrepreneurs working with eco-materials, and internally displaced women who had rebuilt their careers from scratch.

The day began with an introductory session in which each woman shared her personal journey. As participants listened to stories of displacement, career rebuilding, and professional reinvention, a strong sense of unity and connection



quickly emerged. This created a trusting and open atmosphere that was carried through the rest of the event.

Then the Civitta Ukraine team presented the main challenges facing the textile industry, which immediately sparked a very engaged discussion, mainly because the ideathon participants were already actively working on these issues. The challenges centred on shifting from fast fashion to sustainable business models, developing circular solutions, and creating effective systems for collecting, sorting, and recycling textiles.



Ultimately, the teams developed creative yet practical solutions to these challenges and received strong scores from the jury. For example, the “Reweave” team proposed collecting fabric scraps from local brands and transforming them into new, usable material. “Ambasadoria” focused on building a dedicated association exclusively for women in the textile industry. “Adaptive ReWear” aimed to produce adaptive clothing using reused materials. “Eco-style” planned to create a community-driven system for recycling old textiles by involving pensioners.

Despite the challenging circumstances, which included a massive missile attack on Ukrainian cities the night before, the ideathon proceeded as planned in Kyiv. However, not all registered participants were able to attend, and some arrived later in the day due to transport disruptions caused by the attack. Once onsite, a few participants faced difficulties preparing their presentations due to limited digital skills, which required additional support from facilitators. Several participants also mentioned that a full-day format was a bit challenging, especially for those who had travelled long distances. However, organisers deliberately chose to keep the event to one day format in order to avoid the need for overnight stays and to make it possible for women coming from other cities to participate.



Throughout the ideathon, participants showed real personal and professional growth. Many women gained confidence in presenting their ideas to the jury, and for some, it was their first time delivering a professional pitch. The atmosphere of the event was widely praised; participants commented that "everyone was on the same wavelength", which helped create real connections. Many were excited about the new people they met, and several continued their conversations on social media after the event. The Civitta Ukraine team also received many thanks for organising the ideathon and for keeping the textile community connected and supported during difficult times.

6.2 Transnational ideathon insights



The Transnational Ideathon revealed that textile waste and circular transition challenges are structurally similar across partner countries, despite differences in market size and industrial maturity. Participants identified common barriers such as limited recycling infrastructure, complex material composition, and weak economic incentives for circular practices. This convergence of challenges strengthened the recognition that solutions require systemic and cross-sector collaboration rather than isolated initiatives.



A key insight emerging from international teamwork was the value of diverse perspectives in improving solution quality. Mixed-nationality groups demonstrated that combining technical, creative, and managerial viewpoints led to more balanced and feasible proposals. Exposure to different regulatory environments and local practices encouraged participants to question assumptions and refine their thinking.



The study visits further reinforced the importance of connecting sustainability ambitions with operational realities. Participants recognised that circular innovation must align with cost structures, supply chain logistics, and business competitiveness in order to be viable. This shifted discussions from idealistic concepts toward more strategic and implementable approaches.

Another important insight concerned leadership development. The structured pitching process increased participants' confidence in presenting sustainability-driven business ideas, particularly among those with limited prior experience in public speaking. The collaborative format fostered a supportive environment where learning was prioritised over competition.





Overall, the Transnational Ideathon demonstrated that cross-border exchange enhances analytical depth, strengthens leadership confidence, and supports more realistic circular solutions within the textile ecosystem.

6.3 Video testimonials

Mariana from Sweden (HB)



Gabrielle from Italy (Lottozero)





Georgia from Greece (KAINOTOMIA)



Tetiana from Ukraine (CIVITTA)





Arantxa from Belgium (CamaraBelux)



Maria from Spain (MEUS)





7. Conclusions & lessons learned

The implementation of the W4TEX “Be a Manager” Ideathon training approach confirms that women’s empowerment in the textile sector is most effective when leadership development is combined with sustainability knowledge, collaborative learning, and practical problem-solving. The Trainers’ Guide demonstrates that the Ideathon is not simply an event-based activity, but a structured educational process that helps participants move from awareness to action. Through thematic preparation, guided teamwork, mentoring, and pitching, the model creates the conditions for women to strengthen their confidence, test leadership roles, and generate solutions that respond to real challenges in the textile ecosystem.

One of the main conclusions is that structured methodology matters. The learning journey outlined in the Guide, starting with contextual understanding and continuing through reflection, team-based analysis, idea generation, evaluation, and, finally, presentation, proved essential for supporting meaningful participation and stronger outcomes. Participants were better able to produce realistic and sustainability-oriented proposals when they first developed a shared understanding of fast fashion, circularity, and textile waste management. This confirms that innovation in adult education should not rely on spontaneity alone; it requires pedagogical sequencing, clear facilitation, and tools that help learners transform ideas into strategic concepts.

A second important lesson is that experiential learning significantly improves both engagement and quality of results. The combination of practical workshops, role-based activities, teamwork, and study visits enabled participants to connect theory with real operational contexts. In particular, exposure to company practices and circular business models strengthened participants’ understanding of feasibility, trade-offs, and implementation conditions. This helped shift discussions away from abstract sustainability language toward more grounded and credible proposals. The Guide therefore shows that learning becomes more impactful when participants are invited to observe, test, reflect, and apply knowledge in realistic environments.

Another key lesson concerns the role of facilitation. The Guide makes clear that the quality of the learning experience depends heavily on facilitators’ ability to act as guides, moderators, and enablers rather than traditional lecturers. Effective facilitation supported balanced participation, encouraged quieter voices, reduced hierarchy within groups, and created a psychologically safe environment for experimentation. This was particularly important in a training context focused on women’s leadership, where confidence-building and inclusive participation are central objectives. The experience suggests that future editions should continue investing in facilitator preparation, especially in relation to group dynamics, inclusive communication, and methods that combine structure with flexibility.

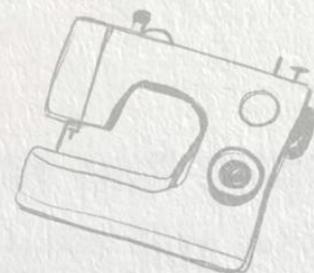
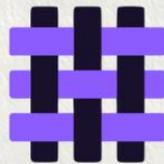


The project also highlights that leadership development is strengthened when participants work collaboratively on real challenges. Team-based ideation allowed women to practice decision-making, negotiation, communication, and public speaking in a supportive setting. Importantly, the process promoted a view of leadership that is not purely hierarchical, but collaborative, strategic, and solution-oriented. This is one of the strongest added values of the W4TEX model: it does not only transmit knowledge about sustainability, but also helps participants position themselves as active contributors, innovators, and potential decision-makers within the textile sector.

A further conclusion is that stakeholder engagement increases the relevance and longer-term value of the training. The involvement of companies, sector experts, local actors, and transnational peers enriched the learning process and reinforced the connection between education and labour market realities. The national and transnational ideathon insights show that participants benefited from exchanging perspectives across countries and professional backgrounds, which improved both the depth of their analysis and the feasibility of their ideas. This demonstrates that cross-sectoral and cross-border collaboration should remain a core feature of the model, especially in sectors undergoing green transition.

Finally, the Guide confirms the strong transferability of the W4TEX approach. Because the methodology is modular, supported by ready-to-use resources, and adaptable to face-to-face, hybrid, and online formats, it can be replicated in different educational and organisational contexts. At the same time, the experience suggests that successful transfer requires maintaining certain core principles: strong thematic preparation, learner-centred facilitation, inclusive participation, practical application, and reflection. These are the elements that preserve the educational value of the Ideathon beyond the textile sector itself.

In conclusion, the W4TEX “Be a Manager” Trainers’ Guide offers more than a methodological framework for running an Ideathon. It presents a tested approach for linking women’s empowerment, sustainability transition, and adult learning in a coherent and practice-oriented way. The main lesson learned is that when participants are supported through a structured, inclusive, and experiential process, they do not only learn about change, but they begin to see themselves as capable of leading it.

W4TEX
women | textile



THE SWEDISH SCHOOL
OF TEXTILES
UNIVERSITY OF BORÅS

civitta



Cámara
Official Spanish Chamber of Commerce
in Belgium and Luxembourg

KAINOTOMIA



LOTTOZERO



Co-funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.