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WE.Circular

O.3.1 Regional Action Plan – Hungary

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Abbreviations and glossary of terms

ASP	Associated Strategic Partner
CE	Circular Economy
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
NSHG	National Stakeholder Groups
RAP	Regional Action Plan
S3	Smart Specialisation Strategy
WE	Women Entrepreneurs

Introduction

This Regional Action Plan (RAP) is developed within the framework of the WE.Circular project, an Interreg Danube Region Programme initiative aimed at empowering women entrepreneurs in the Danube Region by fostering their circular and digital transitions.

The WE.Circular project recognizes that Hungary faces unique challenges and opportunities in supporting women-led businesses in adopting circular economy principles and leveraging digital technologies. This RAP builds upon a foundation of thorough analysis and stakeholder engagement, ensuring its relevance and effectiveness for the region.

Specifically, this RAP leverages the findings of the following key activities within the WE.Circular project:

- **Activity 1.1: Transnational Skills Gaps and Needs Analysis:** This analysis, conducted across all partner countries, identified the specific skills gaps and needs of women entrepreneurs in the region regarding digital technologies, circular economy principles, and smart specialization strategies.
- **Activity 3.2: Analyzing of existing policy and legislative framework:** This activity mapped the existing policy and regulatory landscape at both the national and regional levels, identifying existing support mechanisms and potential barriers to the circular and digital transition of women-led businesses.
- **Recommendations from National Stakeholder Groups (NSHGs):** Throughout the project, the project team has consulted with a National Stakeholder Group comprised of Ministry for National Economy, SEED Foundation, Association of Environmental Enterprises (KSZGYSZ), Budapest University of Jewish Studies, Hétfa Research Institute, Will Foundation, Sosan Design, Nagy Márta UpCycling and others with the aim to validate existing data and gather relevant feedback in key action areas.

The proposed actions in this RAP are designed to address the specific challenges identified through these activities and are tailored to the unique regional context. The implementation of this RAP aims to contribute to the broader objectives of the WE.Circular project, fostering a more inclusive and sustainable circular economy within the Danube Region.

I. Strategic Background and Foundations of the Regional Action Plan

Hungary, located in Central Europe, has a population density of approximately 102,55 inhabitants per km²¹ and a total population of around 9.6 million people, with women constituting about 52% of the population.²

In the entrepreneurial landscape, women are less likely to be self-employed or to run businesses compared to men. In recent years, around 9–10% of employed women have been self-employed, which is below the OECD average and significantly lower than the rate for employed men (approximately 16–18%).

The entrepreneurial ecosystem is characterized by a strong presence of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and sole proprietorships. Women entrepreneurs are increasingly contributing to innovation and economic diversification, particularly in sectors such as services, retail, education, and creative industries, although gender gaps in access to finance, networks, and high-growth opportunities persist.

Policy and Legal Environment

Hungary has several strategic frameworks supporting SME development, digitalisation, and the circular transition. However, these measures are largely gender-neutral and do not specifically target women entrepreneurs.

The **Fifth National Environmental Program (NKP5)**³ serves as the overarching environmental strategy and promotes the transition toward a circular and green

¹ KSH, 2025. Terület, településsűrűség, népsűrűség, 2025. január 1. Available at: https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/fol/hu/fol0006.html

² KSH, 2025. A népesség, népmozgalom főbb mutató. Available at: https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/nep/hu/nep0001.html

³ <https://xn--krnyezetvedelem-jkb3r.hu/nemzeti-kornyezetvedelmi-program#section5781>

economy in alignment with EU objectives. While it advances sustainability goals, it does not incorporate a gender dimension or specific measures for women-led enterprises.

The **Hungarian Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Reinforcement Strategy**⁴ focuses on improving SME competitiveness through digitalisation, innovation, access to finance, and business culture development. Although it mentions disadvantaged groups, including women, gender-specific interventions are minimal. The main dedicated initiative referenced is the **National Entrepreneurship Mentoring Program (OVP)**, which concluded in 2023 after supporting more than 3,000 entrepreneurs. While valuable in strengthening entrepreneurial skills and financial literacy, it did not specifically address circular or digital business transformation.

The **Economic Development and Innovation Operational Programme Plus (GINOP Plus)**⁵ plays a central role in supporting entrepreneurship and innovation. It includes:

- Grants and repayable financial instruments for SMEs
- Support for R&D and innovation projects
- Digital transformation support for businesses
- Capacity-building and training programmes

Hungary's **National Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRF)**⁶ allocates funding for green transition, renewable energy investments, digital infrastructure, and business digitalisation. Although not specifically targeted at women entrepreneurs, these measures create opportunities for women-led businesses to enter green and digital value chains.

⁴ <https://kormany.hu/dokumentumtar/felulvizsgalt-kkv-strategia-2019-2030>

⁵ <https://www.palyazat.gov.hu/programok/szechenyi-terv-plusz/ginop-plusz>

⁶ [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2023\)747098](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2023)747098)

The **Széchenyi Plan Plus (2021–2027)**⁷ allocates substantial EU and national funding for environmental protection, energy efficiency, and digital transformation. Despite its relevance for the circular transition, it lacks dedicated provisions for women-led enterprises.

Similarly, the **National Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3)**⁸ defines eight national and two horizontal priorities aimed at boosting SME productivity and innovation through value chain integration and technological development. However, women entrepreneurs are not explicitly addressed within S3 or Industry 4.0 support frameworks.

Other initiatives — such as the Green National Champions Program (ended in 2022) and the Circular Economy Technology Platform (launched in 2022 to promote professional dialogue and circular development) — contribute to the sustainability agenda but do not incorporate gender-specific measures.

Current Situation of Women Entrepreneurs

As of 2023, Hungary counts approximately 70,319 women-led enterprises compared to 169,856 men-owned businesses. Business leadership data shows that 17% of companies are led solely by women, 43% solely by men, and 40% by mixed-gender teams.⁹ While mixed leadership indicates progress, female-only leadership remains comparatively low. A generational analysis reveals a decline in female entrepreneurship among younger cohorts.

Although SME productivity improved until 2022, performance remains below the EU average, partly due to limited adoption of innovation, digital technologies, and circular

⁷ <https://www.palyazat.gov.hu/programok/szechenyi-terv-plusz>

⁸ <https://nkfih.gov.hu/hivatalrol/strategia-alkotas/nemzeti-intelligens>

⁹ Source: Hungarian Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Reinforcement Strategy. <https://kormany.hu/dokumentumtar/felulvizsgalt-kkv-strategia-2019-2030>

practices. A key structural gap is the absence of an integrated legal and policy framework directly supporting women entrepreneurs in digital and circular fields.

Stakeholder consultations and interviews highlighted several systemic challenges:

- Fragmented and difficult-to-navigate policy and funding environment
- Limited access to finance, especially for early-stage women-led businesses
- Insufficient information about circular regulations and funding opportunities
- Limited familiarity with circular economy technologies and digital tools
- Circular benefits not well communicated
- Internal capacity constraints within SMEs
- Confidence gaps and limited access to professional networks

At the same time, several sectors show strong potential for women entrepreneurs in the digital-circular transition, including sustainable fashion, e-commerce, green beauty and personal care, and HealthTech. A case example is Seed Bonbon Handmade, a women-led enterprise producing plantable gifts from recycled paper, illustrating how circular business models can succeed when mentoring, access to information, and public support are available.

Key Needs and Strategic Recommendations

Based on the national-level review conducted within the WE.Circular project, the following recommendations for supporting women entrepreneurs in Hungary — particularly in relation to digital and circular transitions — were identified:

- Encourage structured networking (on regional level), coaching, and mentoring programmes through chambers of commerce, women's business associations, and incubators to strengthen women-led enterprises.
- Raise awareness on WE success stories and good practices

- Reintroduce and expand structured mentoring programmes with a specific focus on green and digital entrepreneurship.
- Develop tailored financial instruments to improve access to capital for women-led circular and innovation-driven businesses.
- Provide accessible, practice-oriented training on digital tools, circular business models, financial management, and regulatory compliance.

Women entrepreneurs in Hungary represent a significant yet under-supported driver of innovation and sustainability. A comprehensive, coordinated support system is essential to ensure that women are not left behind in Hungary's transition toward a more circular, digital, and innovation-driven economy.

II. Visions for 2026-2030: Envisioning the Region in a Circular and Digital Future - Alignment with Transnational Strategy for WEs Circular Transition

This section of the Regional Action Plan is crucial for aligning regional efforts with the broader objectives of the WE.Circular project, as guided by the principles outlined in the Transnational Strategy to Accelerate Transition Towards a Circular Economy in the Danube Region. The strategy is designed to facilitate a collaborative and unified approach across the Danube region. The RAP is specifically structured to support the overarching goals of "The Danube Goes Circular" by:

- **Contributing to Resource Efficiency:** The measures outlined in this RAP are designed to contribute to increased resource efficiency within the region, supporting the broader transition to a circular economy in alignment with the Transnational Strategy. Through initiatives focused on empowering women-led

enterprises, this RAP will help ensure that this sector is a key driver of these improvements.

- **Advancing Strategic Pillars:** The RAP includes specific measures designed to advance the following strategic pillars, all with a strong emphasis on supporting women entrepreneurs:
 - Promoting Circular Business Models: The RAP measures will foster the development and adoption of new, circular business models among women-led enterprises, ensuring sustainable practices are at the core of their operations.
 - Enhancing Waste and Resource Management: RAP measures focus on improving waste and resource management practices within women-led businesses, promoting closed-loop systems and reducing environmental impact.
 - Raising Awareness and Building Capacity: This RAP involves measures aimed at raising awareness and building capacity among women entrepreneurs regarding circular economy principles, digital transformation, and sustainable business practices.
- By implementing these measures, the RAP will contribute to greater coherence and synergy across the Danube region, ensuring that women entrepreneurs are at the forefront of the transition to a sustainable and circular economy by 2030.

III. Regional Action Plan Measures

- Circular economy transition
- Digital transition
- Policy improvement
- Smart specialization

Measure 1: Awareness raising and networking

Pillars: Measure 1 contributes to the strategic pillars

- Circular economy transition
- Digital transition

Challenges, barriers and gaps:

In Hungary, women entrepreneurs face a set of interconnected ecosystem-level and visibility-related challenges in accessing and developing circular and digital skills. While national strategies increasingly emphasize digitalisation and the transition toward a circular economy, the practical integration of women entrepreneurs into these transformation processes remains uneven. The challenges are less about the absence of initiatives and more about fragmentation, limited coordination, insufficient regional outreach, and low visibility of women-led innovation. The proposed actions under Measure 1 directly respond to these systemic gaps.

One of the core challenges lies in the territorial fragmentation of support structures. Although Hungary hosts universities, innovation centres, business incubators, chambers, and development agencies with relevant expertise in digitalisation and sustainability, these typically operate independently, with limited coordination. Moreover, many organisations do not have the capacity to organise frequent programmes for WE. Thus, the interest is sometimes lost from the participants' side as well. As a result, women entrepreneurs struggle to find integrated, locally accessible support for circular economy and/or digital transition.

A second major challenge concerns the fragmentation and limited capitalization of ongoing national and international project related initiatives. Hungary participates in numerous EU-funded programmes, including Interreg and other transnational cooperation projects, which generate valuable knowledge, methodologies and pilot

results related to digitalisation, sustainability and entrepreneurship. However, these initiatives frequently operate in parallel without systematic coordination, or long-term integration into national or regional development structures. Once project funding ends, outputs often remain underutilized, and synergies between projects are not fully exploited.

A third critical challenge relates to visibility and recognition. In Hungary, women-led enterprises in circular innovation and digital transformation remain underrepresented. Successful women entrepreneurs in these fields are rarely highlighted as role models, which contributes to limited awareness of opportunities and reinforces stereotypes about who can lead in technology-driven or sustainability-focused sectors. This lack of visibility affects not only societal perceptions but also women's self-confidence, networking opportunities and access to partnerships or investment.

The three proposed actions under Measure 1 provide targeted responses by strengthening regional ecosystems through interconnected hubs, ensuring sustainability and capitalization of ongoing initiatives, and enhancing awareness and recognition through storytelling.

Policy alignment of the Measure:

The policy alignment of Measure 1 is multi-layered.

On one hand, it reinforces Hungary's digital transformation strategy like Digital Wellbeing Programme 2030 (Digitális Jólét Program 2030) and the broader National Digitalisation Strategy 2021–2030 emphasizing the need for developing digital competences, supporting SME digitalisation, ensuring regional digital capacity-building and innovation ecosystems.

Moreover, Measure 1 is also aligned with Hungary's circular economy and sustainability commitments, especially those reflected in the National Waste Management Plan 2021–

2027, the National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP), and sustainability objectives embedded in the National Framework Strategy on Sustainable Development. These policies promote resource efficiency, green innovation, and the transition to circular production and consumption models.

In terms of economic and enterprise policy, this measure is consistent with Hungary's SME development and innovation strategies, including priorities under the Economic Development and Innovation Operational Programme Plus (GINOP Plus), the National Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3), and the SME strategy. These frameworks emphasise strengthening innovation ecosystems, improving SME competitiveness – including digital and green competences, and supporting knowledge transfer between regions and sectors.

Rather than creating a parallel structure, Measure 1 translates existing national priorities and initiatives into a more inclusive and coordinated implementation framework.

Actions for Implementation of Measure 1

1.1 Create Regional Circular-Digital Hubs for Women – building on already existing capacity

The creation of Regional Circular-Digital Hubs for Women could address the gap to connect existing capacities into a rotating, bottom-up system, ensuring that knowledge and resources circulate across regions rather than remaining isolated. This approach responds directly to the current lack of structured, regionally balanced ecosystems tailored to women's needs in circular and digital innovation. Rather than creating entirely new institutions, the initiative builds on already existing capacities within universities, innovation centres, business incubators, chambers, and development agencies, connecting them into a structured and collaborative system.

The hubs will operate in a rotating model, ensuring that different regions take an active role over time in hosting activities, sharing expertise, and mobilising local stakeholders. Thereby ensuring the continuous offer for hybrid events.

The bottom-up approach promotes co-ownership, reduces territorial disparities, and ensures that support services are tailored to local needs. This activity strengthens long-term cooperation, improves resource efficiency, and contributes to a more inclusive and resilient circular-digital transition in Hungary.

Implementation Process:

Step 1: Mapping and Capacity Assessment

Identify and assess existing regional capacities relevant to circular economy, digital innovation and women's entrepreneurship.

Step 2: Partnership Formation and Governance Setup

Establish a coordinated hub network by formalising partnerships among selected regional actors. Define roles, responsibilities, and a light governance structure to manage cooperation, knowledge exchange and the rotating system.

Step 3: Design of Service Portfolio

Co-develop a targeted support package tailored to women entrepreneurs, including training on circular business models, digital tools, mentoring, peer-learning formats and networking events.

Step 4: Launch of Rotating Hub Activities

Implement activities through a rotating model, where different regions host thematic workshops, events on a scheduled basis. This ensures geographic balance, visibility across regions and stronger local ecosystem engagement.

Step 5: Monitoring

Establish simple monitoring indicators (number of participants, number of events for skills developments, number of collaborations formed).

1.2 Connect the ongoing international and national initiatives to ensure the sustainability and capitalization of the results

Hungary actively participates in Interreg and other transnational programmes, and policy documents consistently highlight the importance of knowledge transfer, synergy creation, and sustainability of project results. By connecting ongoing international and national initiatives, the proposed action would respond to the current gap in continuity and sustainability, enabling better knowledge transfer, avoiding duplication of efforts, and embedding successful project results into a more stable and accessible support framework.

Implementation process:

Step 1: Joint Mapping Linked to Regional Hubs (Months 1–3)

In coordination with the mapping phase of Activity 1.1, a joint mapping will be carried out identifying ongoing and completed international – with the participation of Hungarian organizations - and national initiatives (e.g. Interreg, Erasmus+, GINOP Plus) relevant to circular economy, digitalisation and women's entrepreneurship.

Step 2: Contacting the relevant organisations and definition of possible cooperation (Months 3–6)

Assess which project outputs can directly enrich the future Regional Circular-Digital Hubs' service portfolio.

Step 3: Integration into Hub Governance Structure (Months 6–9)

Align selected initiatives with the established Regional Hub network ensuring that

knowledge transfer becomes embedded in the hub system rather than remaining ad hoc and fragmented.

1.3 Develop a “Women in Circular Innovation” storytelling campaign to boost visibility and awareness raising (involve the already existing initiatives)

The “Women in Circular Innovation” storytelling campaign is a structured awareness-raising action designed to shape social attitudes toward women’s entrepreneurship, increase the visibility of female entrepreneurial role models, and strengthen awareness of entry points to business development services that support start-up and growth. In the Hungarian context, the campaign is not merely a communication exercise, but a strategic tool to connect mindset change with measurable behavioural outcomes.

The core objective of the campaign is to improve the social acceptance of women as entrepreneurs—particularly in green and digital sectors—and to reduce gender-related barriers associated with business creation and growth. It seeks to address persistent stereotypes, limited visibility of successful women-led enterprises, and low awareness of available support services such as mentoring, training, advisory support, and financing information. To ensure tangible impact, the communication logic is explicitly linked to concrete service entry points, so that increased awareness translates into registrations, programme participation, and engagement with development opportunities.

The campaign is modular in structure and built around a clear narrative framework with three main pillars. First, it highlights the economic contribution of women entrepreneurs as job creators and value chain builders. Second, it addresses work-life compatibility by presenting realistic entrepreneurial life situations and practical solutions that reconcile business activity with family and care responsibilities. Third, it places strong emphasis on green and digital transformation, positioning women

entrepreneurs as active contributors to Hungary's circular and digital transition, in alignment with national digital development programmes such as DIMOP Plus.

A central element of the campaign is role model-based, story-driven communication. This includes the creation of a structured "Role Model Library" featuring short video portraits, podcast episodes, and case studies of exemplary women entrepreneurs. Each story follows a consistent methodology: starting situation, key obstacles, solutions applied, lessons learned, and a clear "next step" directing audiences toward mentoring, training, advisory or funding opportunities.

The campaign is designed as a national-level initiative with regional and local extensions. While stereotypes and perceptions are shaped through national narratives, access to entrepreneurial ecosystems—chambers, incubators, mentors and local networks—depends largely on territorial availability. Therefore, the campaign should build on existing regional network structures, such as the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry's National Entrepreneurial Mentoring Programme, to ensure strong local anchoring and practical follow-up.

For a proposed 12-month implementation period, measurable targets could include achieving at least 20% prompted awareness among the 18–64 population, a minimum 5 percentage-point improvement in two predefined attitude indicators between baseline and closing measurement, and at least 3,000 measurable follow-up actions toward partner programmes (registrations, applications, or booked consultations).

Implementation Process and Timeframe

Step 1: Strategic Design and Baseline Assessment (Months 1–2)

Define the campaign framework, key messages (economic contribution, work-life compatibility, green and digital focus), target groups, and communication channels.

Establish cooperation agreements with Regional Circular-Digital Hubs and relevant national initiatives to ensure alignment and service entry points.

Step 2: Role Model Selection and Content Development (Months 2–5)

Carry out a selection process to identify diverse and credible women entrepreneurs from different regions and sectors. Produce campaign materials, including short video portraits, podcast episodes, case studies and visual content. Each story should follow a structured format (starting point, challenges, solutions, lessons learned, next steps linked to mentoring, training or funding opportunities).

Step 3: Campaign Launch and Media Dissemination (Months 5–9)

Roll out the campaign through online platforms, social media, partner networks and events hosted by Regional Circular-Digital Hubs. Ensure strong calls to action that direct audiences toward measurable service entry points (registrations, mentoring applications, training enrolment).

Step 4: Monitoring and evaluation (Months 10–12)

Conduct a closing survey to measure changes in awareness and attitudes. Document lessons learned and developed recommendations for integrating storytelling elements into long-term national and regional entrepreneurship support frameworks.

Actions for implementation of Measure 1:

Action	Responsible Organization	Supportive Organizations	Time-frame	Budget	Impact
1.1 Create Regional Circular-Digital Hubs for Women – building on already existing capacity	Hungarian Economic Development	SEED Foundation, Association of Environmental Enterprises	12 months	5 000 EUR	At least 20 Circular-Digital Hub nationwide

	Agency (MGFÜ)	(KSZGYSZ), Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MKIK), local NGOs and Universities			<p>Regional kick-off: 3 pilot Circular-Digital Hubs/ region</p> <p>Entrepreneurial engagement: reaching at least 300 SMEs and women entrepreneurs through training, mentoring or advisory services</p>
1.2 Connect the ongoing international and national initiatives to ensure the sustainability and capitalization of the results	Hungarian Economic Development Agency (MGFÜ)	SEED Foundation, Association of Environmental Enterprises (KSZGYSZ), Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MKIK), local NGOs and Universities	9 months	3000 EUR	<p>At least 5 initiatives integrated into the Regional Hub governance structure</p> <p>Minimum 2 joint applications submitted</p>
1.3. Develop a “Women in Circular Innovation” storytelling campaign to boost visibility and awareness raising	Seed Foundation	Hungarian Economic Development Agency (MGFÜ), Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MKIK)	12 months	10 000 EUR	The campaign's prompted awareness should reach at least 20% among the population aged 18–64 (approx. 2,0-2,5 million people)

					<p>At least 5 percentage points improvement in two pre-determined attitude indicators between baseline and final measurement</p> <p>At least 3,000 measurable steps (applications, registrations, appointment bookings) towards partner programs</p> <p>Regional events: 20 locations, average 60 participants (approx. 1,200 people), and at least 200 local contacts for advice or mentoring</p>
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Implementation of the Task for the Specified Time-frame:

For each activity the implementation steps are defined above also including the specified time-frames of the activities.

Expected impact:

Measure 1 is expected to generate multi-level impacts on women entrepreneurs in Hungary by addressing structural, ecosystem-level, and visibility-related barriers in circular and digital entrepreneurship. By creating Regional Circular-Digital Hubs for Women, the measure strengthens regional ecosystems, reduces territorial disparities, and improves access to specialized knowledge, mentoring, and networking. This ensures that women entrepreneurs across Hungary, including those in rural or less-developed regions, can acquire the digital and circular skills necessary to innovate, scale their businesses, and actively participate in the country's green and digital transition.

The measure's focus on connecting ongoing international and national initiatives enhances the sustainability and capitalization of existing EU- and nationally funded projects. By embedding outputs from Interreg, Erasmus+, GINOP Plus, and other programmes into regional hubs, Measure 1 ensures that knowledge, tools, and methodologies are effectively reused, integrated, and scaled. This reduces fragmentation, fosters cross-project learning, and creates a coherent ecosystem where women entrepreneurs can continuously access validated resources and support, increasing both the reach and the long-term impact of public investment in innovation and skills development.

Through the "Women in Circular Innovation" storytelling campaign, Measure 1 also addresses visibility and cultural barriers. By showcasing diverse women entrepreneurs as role models and highlighting their contributions to economic growth, digitalisation, and sustainability, the campaign strengthens social acceptance of female entrepreneurship, challenges gender stereotypes, and inspires new entrants into circular and digital sectors.

In the long run, linking these stories to concrete service entry points (mentoring, training, advisory, funding) could translate awareness into measurable action, driving increased participation in business support programmes.

Measure 2: Circular and digital skills development for women entrepreneurs

Pillars: Measure 2 is contributing to the strategic pillars

- Circular economy transition,
- Digital transition

Challenges, barriers and gaps:

In Hungary, women entrepreneurs seeking to engage in circular economy and digital transformation face multiple interrelated challenges that limit their ability to access knowledge, build skills, and scale innovative solutions.

The proposed activities under Measure 2 directly respond to these systemic gaps by offering structured support, learning networks, and mentoring specifically designed for female entrepreneurs.

One major challenge is the limited access to targeted knowledge and learning resources on circular and digital business practices. While training materials exist, they are often scattered, generalized, or not tailored to the needs of women entrepreneurs, leaving a gap in practical, actionable learning.

A second relevant challenge is the lack of opportunities for peer learning and knowledge exchange. Many women entrepreneurs struggle to learn from real-world examples of successful circular or digital initiatives due to fragmented networks and limited visibility of role models.

A third critical challenge is the need for structured, sustained mentorship linking women to experienced entrepreneurs and advisors in circular and digital domains. Existing mentoring programmes often lack continuity, thematic focus, or gender-sensitive design, which limits their effectiveness for women seeking to implement innovative solutions.

Overall, this measure tries to answer the needs and challenges targeted knowledge accessibility, practical experience exchange, and sustained mentorship. The three proposed activities—expanding learning networks, organizing hybrid knowledge-sharing events, and establishing a national mentoring system—directly target these barriers, creating a cohesive ecosystem that strengthens skills, fosters innovation, and empowers women to lead in Hungary's circular and digital transition.

Policy alignment of the Measure:

Since this measure focuses on the Circular and digital skills development for women entrepreneurs it supports the circular and digital transition of the SME sector.

In connection with this, firstly, it supports Hungary's circular economy and sustainability frameworks, notably the National Waste Management Plan 2021–2027, the National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP), and the sustainability goals outlined in the National Framework Strategy on Sustainable Development. These policies aim to promote resource efficiency, support green innovation, and advance the transition toward circular production and consumption models. By facilitating the adoption of circular and sustainable practices among women-led businesses, the measure translates these policy ambitions into practical entrepreneurial impact.

Moreover, it also contributes to Hungary's broader digital transformation agenda, including the National Digitalisation Strategy 2021–2030, which prioritise the development of digital skills, the digitalisation of SMEs, regional capacity-building, and the reinforcement of innovation ecosystems.

The strategic objectives of this measure are also aligned with general SME development and competitiveness aspects:

- the goals of the SME Strategy 2019–2030, particularly the priorities related to increasing productivity, supporting business scale-up, and developing entrepreneurial skills;
- the directions of the National Competitiveness Strategy, which aims to strengthen the domestic SME sector and promote a higher value-added economic structure;
- the 2021–2030 governmental action plans aimed at strengthening the social role of women and expanding their participation in the labour market;
- the equal opportunities and anti-discrimination policy frameworks.

Actions for Implementation of Measure 2

2.1 Expand the WE.Circular learning network in Hungary (training materials developed in the field of circular and digital transition)

One major challenge is the limited access to targeted knowledge and learning resources on circular and digital business practices. While training materials exist, they are often scattered, generalized, or not tailored to the needs of women entrepreneurs, leaving a gap in practical, actionable learning. The training materials developed within the WE.Circular project could overcome this challenge. Thus, within the framework of this action the intention is to further expand the WE.Circular learning network.

The action involves the Hubs and the Academia. Cooperation with higher education institutions was a key topic during the discussions with the National Stakeholder Groups

meetings, especially the potential role of universities in developing micro-credentials and targeted training solutions with the 5 WE.Circular training material.

Implementation Process and Timeframe

Step 1: Promotion of the training materials (Months 1-3)

This step focuses on promoting the WE.Circular training materials amongst organisations relevant to women entrepreneurs and in the Circular HUB established within Measure 1.

Step 2: Rollout of training modules (Months 4-9)

In this step, the training modules are deployed through the Regional Circular-Digital Hubs by the relevant WE. The hubs facilitate access for female entrepreneurs, promote the courses locally, and provide participant support, ensuring that the network reaches all targeted regions effectively.

Step 3: Evaluation

This step involves collecting participant feedback, assessing improvements in skills, and refining the materials and delivery methods. This ensures the sustainability of the learning network and maximizes its long-term impact on women entrepreneurs' circular and digital capabilities.

Step 4: Scaling plan

Analysing the opportunities for Micro-credential development and initiating the cooperation based on the feedback previously collected.

In order to make the updated course available to a wider audience, the micro-credential development opportunities will be assessed. Discussions will be initiated with relevant university representatives on how to progress with this.

2.2 Organization of hybrid events for knowledge sharing and good practices in applying digital and circular solutions in female-led businesses (rotating system)

Many women entrepreneurs struggle to learn from real-world examples of successful circular or digital initiatives due to fragmented networks and limited visibility of role models. Activity 2.2 addresses this challenge by organizing hybrid events in a rotating system, facilitating the sharing of best practices, practical case studies, and experiential insights across regions. This approach not only fosters skill development but also strengthens professional networks and peer support among women entrepreneurs. The Circular-Digital Hubs could be used for this purpose.

Implementation Process and Timeframe

Step 1: Planning and framework setup (Month 1-2)

This step defines the thematic focus of the events, the target audience, and expected outcomes related to knowledge transfer, skill development, and networking. The project team establishes a rotating calendar among participating hubs and sets event guidelines and hybrid format protocols to ensure consistency and quality.

Step 2: Stakeholder engagement and content preparation (Months 2-4)

In this step, local and international women entrepreneurs, experts, and role models are invited as speakers, while practical case studies and best practices are collected. The hubs coordinate local logistics and online platform setup, and knowledge-sharing materials are prepared in line with WE.Circular resources.

Step 3: Event delivery (Months 4-12)

The hybrid events are conducted throughout the year, combining in-person participation with online streaming. Structured discussions, Q&A sessions, and practical workshops are held to facilitate peer learning and networking. Participant feedback and engagement metrics are collected to continuously improve the events and ensure long-term sustainability.

Step 4: Monitoring and evaluation (ongoing/Months 6-12)

2.3 Establishing a National Circular-Digital Mentoring Network for Women Entrepreneurs – through reactivating the former National Entrepreneurship Mentoring Program (OVP) framework with added modules on circular economy and digitalization

The Women Entrepreneurs Personal Mentoring Program (hereinafter: the Program) is a comprehensive business development intervention aimed at building the competencies of female-owned or female-led micro and small enterprises. It operates within a structured, quality-assured mentoring system to provide targeted, skills-based support.

The Program primarily targets female-owned or female-led micro and small enterprises, divided into two differentiated subgroups:

- Foundation Track: businesses in the stabilization phase (0–3 years)
- Growth Track: already operating businesses with growth ambitions

The policy rationale of this action is rooted in structural barriers that limit women entrepreneurs' access to financing, business networks, strategic knowledge, and growth opportunities. Experiences from inclusive EU entrepreneurship policies and implemented national mentoring programmes, such as the National Entrepreneurship Mentoring Program (Országos Vállalkozói Mentorprogram, OVP), indicate the following:

- a. Financial instruments alone are not sufficient; personalised advice and mentoring are necessary to achieve tangible performance improvements.
- b. The key to supporting women entrepreneurs lies in the combination of mentoring and network integration, where differentiated pathways are more effective than uniform, one-size-fits-all programmes.
- c. Recommendations highlight the need for targeted advisory services and differentiated service provision.
- d. A quality-assured mentoring network is critical, with competence assessment and follow-up being essential components.

Building on the national mentoring methodology and competence measurement framework, the Action reactivates the former National Entrepreneurship Mentoring Program (OVP) framework and integrating dedicated modules on circular economy and digitalisation. This provides ongoing guidance, tailored advice, and long-term support, enhancing women's confidence, problem-solving capabilities, and business growth potential.

A detailed description of this potential program has been prepared, and it will be handed over to the representatives of the Ministry for National Economy.

The mentoring program simultaneously serves economic development, competitiveness, and social policy objectives.

The Program's objectives are defined on two levels:

1. Annual operational performance indicators – measuring short-term outputs and immediate development outcomes.
2. Structural and economic impact indicators – measurable over a medium- to long-term horizon of at least five years.

Annual targets (1-year implementation period – outputs and short-term outcomes)

These targets primarily assess the Program's operational efficiency and immediate development results:

- Number of women entrepreneurs involved: minimum 1,000 per year
- Number of mentoring sessions delivered: 8,000–12,000 per year
- Coverage of input–output competence assessments: 100%
- Average improvement in the Key Competence Index: minimum 10% by program completion
- Participant satisfaction: minimum 85% positive feedback
- Participants completing an individual development plan: 95%

For participants on the Growth Track:

- Strategic business plan prepared: 100%
- Entrepreneurs prepared to access external financing: minimum 40%
- Entrepreneurs with a new market entry plan: minimum 30%

These indicators ensure measurable operational performance and annual budget accountability.

Medium- to long-term targets (5+ years – structural and economic impact)

These indicators assess the Program's effect on competitiveness and economic development:

- Minimum 5,000 women entrepreneurs reached
- Average revenue growth of at least 15% within 24 months after program completion
- Employment growth among Growth Track participants: minimum 20%
- Business survival rate: at least 10 percentage points above the national SME average
- Share of companies initiating or expanding export activities: minimum 15% on the Growth Track

- Sustained improvement in key competences: minimum 15% (measured through follow-up)

Measurement tools:

- Standardized input and output competence assessments
- 12- and 24-month follow-up economic data collection (revenue, employment, export)
- Option for comparative analysis with a control group

The two-tiered indicator system ensures that the Program is accountable in the short term while generating strategic, long-term impact, in line with the SME Strategy's objectives to enhance competitiveness and labour market participation.

Action	Responsible Org.	Supportive Org.	Time-frame	Budget	Impact
2.1 Expand the WE.Circular learning network in Hungary (training materials developed in the field of circular and digital transition)	Hungarian Economic Development Agency (MGFÜ), Pannon Business Network (PBN)	Circular-Digital Hubs, local Universities	12 months	20 000 EUR	Improved access to targeted circular and digital training materials Strengthened skills of WE Integration of micro-credentials
2.2 Organization of hybrid events for knowledge	Pannon Business Network	Circular-Digital Hubs, Hungarian Economic Development	12 months (annual repetition)	20 000 EUR/year and scaling plan	Strengthened peer learning Improved visibility of

sharing and good practices in applying digital and circular solutions in female-led businesses		Agency (MGFÜ)			good practices Enhances professional networks among WE
2.3 Establishing a National Circular-Digital Mentoring Network for Women Entrepreneurs	Seed Foundation	Ministry for National Economy, Hungarian Economic Development Agency (MGFÜ)	12 months (operational cycle with annual targets) + 5-year structural impact horizon	Foundation Track: 1,510 EUR/participant Growth Track: 2,795 EUR/participant In total approx.: 11,54 million EUR	At least 1,000 women reached annually 8,000-12,000 mentoring sessions delivered/year Competence improvement: minimum 15% (measured through follow-up) Participant satisfaction: minimum 85% positive feedback from participants 95% completing with an individual development plan

Implementation of the Task for the Specified Time-frame:

For each activity the implementation steps are defined above also including the specified time-frames of the activities.

Expected impact:

Measure 2 contributes to strengthening the capacity of women entrepreneurs to successfully adapt to the circular and digital transition. By improving access to targeted training, fostering peer learning and providing structured mentoring opportunities, the measure supports women-led businesses in developing the competencies needed to remain competitive, innovative, and sustainable in a rapidly transforming economic environment.

Under **Action 2.1**, the expansion of the WE.Circular learning network in Hungary will improve access to high-quality training materials specifically designed to address the challenges and opportunities of the circular and digital transition. These learning resources will enable women entrepreneurs to develop practical knowledge and skills related to sustainable business models, digital tools, and circular economy practices. The integration of micro-credentials will further support flexible and modular learning pathways, allowing participants to formally recognise newly acquired competencies and continuously update their skills in line with labour market demands.

Through **Action 2.2**, the organisation of hybrid knowledge-sharing events will facilitate the exchange of experiences and good practices in applying digital and circular solutions within female-led businesses. These events will strengthen peer learning and encourage the practical adoption of innovative approaches. By showcasing successful examples and creating spaces for dialogue, the initiative will also increase the visibility

of good practices and contribute to building stronger professional networks among women entrepreneurs.

Action 2.3 will establish a National Circular-Digital Mentoring Network for Women Entrepreneurs, providing structured and continuous support for skill development. The network is expected to reach at least 1,000 women annually, delivering 8,000–12,000 mentoring sessions per year. Through personalised guidance and targeted competence development, participants are expected to achieve a minimum 15% improvement in relevant competencies, measured through follow-up assessments. The initiative aims to maintain at least 85% positive feedback from participants, reflecting a high level of satisfaction with the mentoring process. Furthermore, 95% of participants are expected to complete the programme with an individual development plan, ensuring that mentoring outcomes translate into concrete professional and business development steps.

Overall, Measure 2 will contribute to building a stronger ecosystem that supports women entrepreneurs in navigating the digital and circular transition, fostering innovation, resilience, and long-term business sustainability.

Measure 3: Access to finance for circular and digital transformation

Pillars: Measure 3 contributes to the strategic pillars

- Circular economy transition
- Digital transition
- Policy improvement

Challenges, barriers and gaps:

A key challenge lies in the limited access to tailored financial resources. Women-led SMEs often face structural barriers to financing, including less time to navigate through

the calls and the tendency to be more risk-averse than male counterparts. This can result in missed opportunities for investment in circular and digital innovations.

The objective of this measure is not solely to provide funding, but also to:

- Reduce the financing gap,
- Improve access to credit (addressing the collateral gap),
- Enhance business survival and growth rates,
- Strengthen outreach to women entrepreneurs operating in rural and lower-resource regions.

International experience shows that women entrepreneurs typically start with lower capital, have smaller financing networks, and receive lower loan volumes, even when business parameters are comparable.

Financing disparities are not only market-based but also stem from informational, trust-related, and institutional factors.

In Hungary, relevant financial instruments currently exist (preferential loans, guarantee programs, investment grants); however, these are not specifically optimized for women entrepreneurs.

Moreover, even when financial support is available, women entrepreneurs may lack guidance on how to apply it strategically for circular and digital transformation. There is a difficulty in navigating information and support systems. Women entrepreneurs may be unaware of funding opportunities, advisory services, or training programs.

Policy alignment of the Measure:

This measure – apart from the already mentioned circular and digital strategies are in line with several other existing Hungarian and European Union (EU) policy frameworks:

EU level

- EU Women Entrepreneurship Action Plan: directly supports increasing women's participation in entrepreneurship and promotes the combination of financial and non-financial instruments.
- EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025: strengthens the economic dimension of gender equality.
- SME Strategy for a Sustainable and Digital Europe (EU SME Strategy): focuses on improving SMEs' access to finance and promoting territorial cohesion.
- COSME / InvestEU and guarantee programmes: provide instruments suitable for incentivising financial intermediaries and enabling risk-sharing mechanisms.
- European Structural and Investment Funds (ERDF, ESF+, EAFRD): offer financing opportunities for rural outreach, capacity-building, and job creation.

National level

- National development and operational programmes: provide funding streams and service channels aligned with SME development, innovation, and territorial equality objectives.
- Hungarian Development Bank (MFB) and related loan/guarantee products: can be integrated into central guaranteed frameworks through MFB Point-type intermediary structures.
- National labour market development and enterprise development action plans: allow the integration of training, mentoring, and networking components.
- Rural development and regional cohesion programmes: align with objectives related to small-settlement access and territorial inclusion.

Actions for Implementation of Measure 3:

3.1 Launching a targeted funding programme for Women-Led SMEs (2026)

This action focuses on the launch of a targeted funding scheme for women-led SMEs to providing accessible financial support, lowering barriers to entry and enabling practical experimentation with sustainable and digital business solutions.

MGFÜ has already initiated internal discussions on this. The needed funding might be available in the second half of 2026.

3.2 Voucher scheme to support the circular-digital transition (based on VSME Standard)

A voucher scheme supporting ESG voluntary reporting offers structured, action-oriented support to help SMEs adopt new technologies, eco-efficient practices, or digital tools. Although this call is not directly targeted to WE, the communication and the promotion of that could reach more women if promoted that way. Women tend to react more often to keywords like sustainability.

The call should open in 2026 Q1.

3.3 Designated subsection for women led enterprises in the SME central portal (vali.hu) – central information portal

In Hungary the official SME portal is the vali.hu where all the relevant information and calls are available for SMEs.

The portal is now under development, so it is a great timing to add some propose a subsection targeted to women-led entrepreneurs. This subsite could have information about the WE.Circular Virtual Toolbox, add a virtual place for the story telling campaign videos, and provide information about the Hubs and the related relevant events. Moreover, it could contain information on the related targeted calls, as well.

3.4 Organisation of financial literacy and investment-readiness training sessions (training materials developed within WE.Circular project)

Within the framework of this activity the focus would be on the training materials developed within the WE.Circular project. This could be also promoted through the Hubs and the vali.hu subsite. The training session could be held online and in hybrid mode as well and even with a self-paced solution when the communication will only divert the attention to the e-learning surface of the Portal.

3.5 Promoting successful case studies for visibility and as an urge to take part in support schemes

This activity aims to strengthen women entrepreneurs' confidence and motivation to engage in circular and digital transition – particularly in relation to financing – by showcasing real, credible success stories.

As part of the broader awareness-raising storytelling successful case studies could be demonstrated showcasing how different financing instruments (e.g. grants, preferential loans, guarantees, voucher schemes, blended finance solutions) have supported women-led SMEs in implementing circular and digital innovations and achieving long-term growth.

Actions for implementation of Measure 3:

Action	Responsible Organization	Supportive Organizations	Time-frame	Budget	Impact
3.1 Launching a targeted funding programme for Women-Led SMEs (2026)	Hungarian Economic Development Agency (MGFÜ)	Ministry for National Economy	Starting in Q3.Q4 2026	5 million EUR	Number of women-led SMEs supported Total financing allocated Increase in circular/digital investment by beneficiaries
3.2 Voucher	Hungarian	Ministry for	Starting	1	Number of

scheme to support the circular-digital transition (based on VSME Standard)	Economic Development Agency (MGFÜ)	National Economy	in Q1 2026.	million EUR	vouchers issued SMEs adopting ESG/digital practices geographical coverage (including rural areas)
3.3 Designated subsection for women led enterprises in the SME central portal (vali.hu) – central information portal	Hungarian Economic Development Agency (MGFÜ)	Ministry for National Economy	2026 (aligned with portal launch)	10 000 EUR	Portal visits Number of women accessing resources Engagement with the Virtual Toolbox and the storytelling videos
3.4 Organisation of financial literacy and investment-readiness training sessions	Regional Circular-Digital Hubs;	Hungarian Economic Development Agency; Pannon Business Network (PBN); SEED Foundation	2026 (continuous/hybrid format)	20,000 EUR	Number of participants Improvement in Key Competence Index Participant satisfaction.
3.5 Promoting successful case studies for visibility and as an urge to take part in support schemes	Hungarian Economic Development Agency (MGFÜ),	Pannon Business Network (PBN), Seed Foundation; Regional Circular-Digital Hubs, Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MKIK)	2026-2027 (campaign)	30,000-60,000 EUR	Number of case studies published Reach and engagement metrics Increase in applications to funding schemes by women entrepreneurs

Implementation of the Task for the Specified Time-frame:

For each activity the implementation steps are defined above also including the specified time-frames of the activities.

Impact

These actions target the combined financial, informational, and motivational barriers women entrepreneurs face, supporting increased participation in circular and digital transformation while accounting for gender-specific tendencies toward lower financial risk-taking.

Measure 4: Policy support & structural framework

Pillars: Measure 2 contributes to the strategic pillars

- Circular economy transition;
- Digital transition;
- Policy improvement;

Challenges, Barriers and Gaps:

Despite the growing importance of the circular and digital transition, women-led SMEs continue to face several structural barriers in accessing financial resources and targeted support schemes. One of the key challenges is the **limited availability of policies and dedicated programmes that explicitly promote women entrepreneurs in the circular economy and digital transformation fields**. While general SME support schemes exist, they often do not sufficiently address the specific needs, business models, and scale of women-led enterprises.

Another important barrier is the **limited access to tailored financial instruments** that support investments in circular and digital innovation. Women entrepreneurs frequently encounter difficulties in accessing traditional financing due to lower collateral availability, smaller company size, or limited investor networks. As a result, many

women-led businesses are unable to implement circular business models or invest in digital solutions that could enhance their competitiveness and sustainability.

In addition, there is a **gap in financial literacy and investment readiness**, particularly regarding innovative financing opportunities related to sustainability and digital transformation. Many entrepreneurs lack the necessary knowledge to navigate funding opportunities, prepare investment proposals, or effectively engage with investors and financial institutions.

Information fragmentation also represents a significant challenge. **Access to clear, centralised information on available funding opportunities and support programmes remains limited**, making it more difficult for women entrepreneurs to identify and utilise relevant schemes. This highlights the need for a **more efficient and better targeted support system**, which integrates financial instruments, knowledge development, and easily accessible information platforms.

By addressing these barriers through targeted funding programmes, voucher schemes, improved information access, and financial literacy development, the measure aims to strengthen the capacity of women-led SMEs to participate in and benefit from the circular and digital transition.

Policy alignment of the Measure:

The strategic objectives of this measure are aligned with several national policy frameworks that aim to strengthen the competitiveness, sustainability, and inclusiveness of the Hungarian economy.

In particular, the measure contributes to the objectives of the **SME Strategy 2019–2030**, especially the priorities related to increasing productivity, supporting business scale-up, and developing entrepreneurial skills. By improving access to finance, strengthening

financial literacy, and supporting innovation among women-led SMEs, the measure helps enhance the growth potential and resilience of the SME sector.

The measure is also consistent with the directions of the **National Competitiveness Strategy**, which emphasises the importance of strengthening the domestic SME sector and promoting a **higher value-added economic structure**. Supporting investments in circular and digital solutions among women-led businesses contributes to improving innovation capacity, productivity, and long-term competitiveness.

Furthermore, the measure aligns with the **2021–2030 governmental action plans aimed at strengthening the social role of women and expanding their participation in the labour market**. By specifically targeting women entrepreneurs, the measure supports gender equality in entrepreneurship and promotes the economic empowerment of women.

Finally, the initiative is consistent with the broader **equal opportunities and anti-discrimination policy frameworks**, which aim to ensure inclusive access to economic opportunities and reduce structural inequalities. Through targeted support for women-led enterprises, the measure contributes to creating a more inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem and fostering balanced economic development.

Actions for Implementation of Measure 4:

4.1 Drafting a policy related proposal package for the Ministry for National Economy

The drafting of a policy-related proposal package for the Ministry for National Economy will support evidence-based policymaking aimed at strengthening the circular and digital transition of women-led SMEs.

Within the framework of the WE.Circular project, MGFÜ engaged an external expert company that facilitated and moderated the Policy Making Camp. Based on the

discussions and international experiences collected during this process, the experts compiled a **policy proposal package** that brings together good practices and innovative policy ideas identified across participating countries.

The objective of the proposal package is to **support the domestic adaptation of successful international approaches** and contribute to the advancement of national policies that promote the circular and digital transition of women-led enterprises. The document synthesises the key outcomes of the Policy Making Camp and translates them into concrete, actionable policy recommendations tailored to the Hungarian context.

The proposal package includes several proposed actions, such as:

- **Awareness-raising communication campaign** focusing on circular economy opportunities for women entrepreneurs
- **Circular Hub Programme** to support collaboration, innovation, and knowledge exchange
- **Personal mentoring programme for women entrepreneurs**
- **Targeted financial support schemes for women-led businesses**

The proposal package will be presented and handed over to representatives of the Ministry for National Economy in **Q2 2026**. The impact of this action will be reflected in the **number of policy proposals developed**, their **alignment with circular and digital transition strategies**, and the **feedback received from policymakers** regarding the relevance and potential applicability of the recommendations.

4.2 Capacity building for policymakers and public institutions (utilizing the Virtual Toolbox)

The **Virtual Toolbox** is designed as a **centralised digital knowledge-sharing platform** for

policymakers and stakeholders, serving as a one-stop shop to support the development of national and regional strategies related to women entrepreneurship, the circular economy, and digital/Industry 4.0 transition. The platform brings together the main findings of the WE.Circular project, including identified policy measures, research results, and good practices collected from participating countries in the Danube Region. By consolidating these resources in one accessible online interface, the toolbox supports evidence-based policymaking and facilitates the design of more effective support instruments for women entrepreneurs.

The Virtual Toolbox will be publicly accessible at: <http://wecirculartoolbox.eu/>.

The impact of this activity will be reflected in the **number of policymakers trained**, the **attendance of the workshop**, and the **level of participant satisfaction** measured through feedback collected after the event. In the longer term, the action also aims to encourage the **adoption and use of the Virtual Toolbox in policy planning processes**, thereby supporting the development of more targeted and informed policies that promote the circular and digital transition of women-led enterprises.

4.3 Workshop sessions Supporting the Understanding of Legal Regulations and Compliance Obligations for Women Entrepreneurs

This activity aims to strengthen the regulatory awareness and compliance capacity of women-led micro and small enterprises by providing targeted training on legal obligations relevant to business operation, digitalisation, and circular transition. Many women entrepreneurs face challenges in navigating complex regulatory frameworks, including taxation, reporting obligations, environmental compliance, data protection, labour law, and public procurement requirements. Limited access to specialised legal knowledge can increase operational risk, discourage investment, and hinder participation in support schemes.

The proposed training programme would provide practical, easy-to-understand guidance on key regulatory areas affecting women-led SMEs, with particular focus on circular economy requirements (e.g. waste management, sustainability reporting, ESG-related expectations).

This could be integrated into the Hubs' activities to reach locally as many WE as possible. The format should be hybrid – the webinar types of the events should be also promoted.

Implementation Process and Timeframe

Step 1: Promotion and discussion of this concept to the HUBs (Months 1-3)

Step 2: Development of the workshop content (Months 4-6)

Step 3: Implementation of the hybrid workshops (Months 7-12)

Step 4: Evaluation and needed modifications/amendments of the workshop materials/content (Month 13-15)

Step 5: Uploading the materials to the VALI platform to support the wider use of the materials (Month 16-17)

Actions for implementation of Measure 4:

Action	Responsible Organization	Supportive Organizations	Time-frame	Budget	Impact
4.1 Drafting a policy related proposal package for the Ministry for National	Hungarian Economic Development Agency (MGFÜ)	Horváth & Partners Ltd.	2026 Q1-Q2	6000 EUR	Number of policy proposals drafted Alignment with circular/digital transition

Economy					strategies Policymakers' feedback
4.2 Capacity building for policymakers and public institutions (utilizing the virtual toolbox)	Hungarian Economic Development Agency (MGFÜ)	SEED Foundation, Association of Environmental Enterprises (KSZGYSZ)	Q2 2026	20,000EUR	Number of policymakers trained Workshop attendance Participant satisfaction Adoption of the Virtual Toolbox in policy planning
4.3 Workshop sessions Supporting the Understanding of Legal Regulations and Compliance Obligations for Women Entrepreneurs	Regional Circular-Digital Hubs	Hungarian Association of Environmental Enterprises; Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MKIK), Hungarian Economic Development Agency (MGFÜ)	2026 (hybrid, ongoing throughout the year)	20 000 EUR	Number of workshop delivered Number of WE trained Improvement in regulatory awareness (survey-based)

Implementation of the Task for the Specified Time-frame:

For each activity the implementation steps are defined above also including the specified time-frames of the activities.

IV. Monitoring of the Regional Action Plan implementation

Effective monitoring of the implementation of the Regional Action Plan is essential for monitoring progress, assessing effects and timely adjusting activities in accordance with the objectives of the WE.Circular project. The monitoring process will ensure transparency, measurability of results and their alignment with the priorities defined

through the RAP measures. Monitoring will be based on clearly defined key performance indicators (KPIs), regular data collection and quality communication between all involved partners and institutions.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

For each of the three measures, performance indicators are foreseen that will enable objective monitoring of results:

- Measure 1:
 - At least 20 Circular-Digital Hub nationwide
 - Regional kick-off: 3 pilot Circular-Digital Hubs/ region
 - Entrepreneurial engagement: reaching at least 300 SMEs and women entrepreneurs through training, mentoring or advisory services.
 - At least 5 initiatives integrated into the Regional Hub governance structure
 - Minimum 2 joint applications submitted.
 - The campaign's prompted awareness should reach at least 20% among the population aged 18–64 (approx. 2,0-2,5 million people)
 - At least 5 percentage points improvement in two pre-determined attitude indicators between baseline and final measurement
 - At least 3,000 measurable steps (applications, registrations, appointment bookings) towards partner programs
 - Regional events: 20 locations, average 60 participants (approx. 1,200 people), and at least 200 local contacts for advice or mentoring
- Measure 2:
 - Improved access to targeted circular and digital training materials
 - Strengthened skills of WE
 - Integration of micro-credentials
 - Strengthened peer learning

- Improved visibility of good practices
 - Enhances professional networks among WE
 - At least 1,000 women reached annually
 - 8,000-12,000 mentoring sessions delivered/year
 - Competence improvement: minimum 15% (measured through follow-up)
 - Participant satisfaction: minimum 85% positive feedback from participants
 - 95% completing with an individual development plan
- Measure 3:
- Number of women-led SMEs supported
 - Total financing allocated
 - Increase in circular/digital investment by beneficiaries
 - Number of vouchers issued
 - SMEs adopting ESG/digital practices
 - geographical coverage (including rural areas)
 - Portal visits
 - Number of women accessing resources
 - Engagement with the Virtual Toolbox and the storytelling videos
 - Number of participants
 - Improvement in Key Competence Index
 - Participant satisfaction
 - Number of case studies published
 - Reach and engagement metrics
 - Increase in applications to funding schemes by women entrepreneurs
- Measure 4:
- Number of policy proposals drafted
 - Alignment with circular/digital transition strategies
 - Policymakers' feedback

- Number of policymakers trained
- Workshop attendance
- Participant satisfaction
- Adoption of the Virtual Toolbox in policy planning
- Number of workshops delivered
- Number of WE trained
- Improvement in regulatory awareness (survey-based)

Frequency and Tools for Monitoring

Monitoring will be conducted on a semi-annual basis (every 6 months), with an annual review of overall progress. A combination of digital and communication tools will be used to collect data:

- Online questionnaires and evaluation forms via e-mail,
- Short reports from partners and institutions involved in the implementation of measures,
- Analysis of the platform and social networks (visit statistics, user engagement, activity overview),
- Follow-up interviews and focus groups with program beneficiaries, mentors and organizations.

All data will be consolidated into an internal monitoring report that will serve as a basis for discussion and decision-making on further steps.

Responsibilities for Monitoring

The monitoring will be coordinated by the Hungarian Economic Development Agency (MGFÜ) and Pannon Business Network (PBN).

V. Recommendations for Enhancing Long-Term Impact

The sustainability and transferability of the Hungarian RAP are crucial to ensure that the results achieved within the WE.Circular project continue to generate tangible benefits beyond the project's lifetime. The long-term impact of the RAP depends on embedding its actions into existing national structures, maintaining partnerships, and continuously updating knowledge and skills in response to emerging challenges in circular and digital transformation.

To secure this continuity, the mechanisms developed under WE.Circular, such as the Circular-Digital Hubs for Women, the storytelling campaign, the National Circular-Digital Mentoring Network for Women Entrepreneurs or the targeted funding programme for women-led SMEs should be institutionalised within established national and regional ecosystems. Their integration into existing frameworks managed by public agencies, NGOs and universities will ensure that these tools continue to provide training, mentoring and financial support after the project closure. The Ministry for National Economy, the Hungarian Economic Development Agency and the Circular-Digital Hubs can play a key role in maintaining these structures as part of their ongoing support for entrepreneurship and innovation.

Long-term policy impact requires strengthening the links between the RAP and Hungary's national strategies. The Transnational Policy Learning Centre (TPLC) and the Virtual Policy Toolbox developed under the project will serve as valuable resources for policymakers, enabling regular access to best practices, legal updates, and circular-economy models. Through these instruments, Hungarian institutions can continue to exchange experiences with other Danube Region partners, ensuring that the lessons

from WE.Circular are reflected in future policy revisions, particularly in the next National SME Strategy and the Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation (2027–2035).

An important principle guiding the development of the RAP was to build on existing initiatives and capacities rather than creating entirely new structures. The measures were designed to identify and connect already operating programmes, networks, and support schemes related to women entrepreneurship, circular economy, and digital transition. By coordinating and strengthening these existing efforts, the RAP promotes a more efficient use of available resources and avoids duplication of initiatives.

This bottom-up approach, involving relevant stakeholders and organisations already active in the ecosystem, ensures stronger ownership and long-term commitment from participating actors. As a result, the proposed actions rely largely on existing institutional capacities and partnerships, which increases their feasibility and sustainability. This approach also means that the implementation of the RAP does not require the allocation of substantial new financial resources, while still enabling meaningful and lasting impact through improved coordination, cooperation, and strategic alignment.

Finally, the RAP's impact will rely on continuous monitoring and adaptation. The monitoring system established under the project should remain operational after 2028, coordinated by MGFÜ and PBN in collaboration with relevant institutions.