

The logo for WeRin features the text "WeRin" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The letter "i" is lowercase and has a small yellow dot above it. The text is centered within a white circle. Surrounding this central circle are several colorful, fan-shaped segments in shades of purple, pink, orange, and yellow, arranged in a circular pattern that resembles a stylized sun or a flower.

**WeRin**

**Meet our final 15 successful female role model entrepreneurs/change makers embedded in the regional ecosystem.**

Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



# INTRODUCING THE CHANGE MAKERS

As part of the **WeRin** research & discovery phase, we are delighted to showcase our final eight successful female role model entrepreneurs already embedded in the regional ecosystem.

We proudly introduce female entrepreneur role models from Croatia, Turkey, Ireland, Germany, Brazil and the Netherlands. Each place emphasis on the agency we have as entrepreneurs and how teamwork and collaboration are important to create solutions and have an authentic voice to champion motivation.

The interviews, conducted by female students and aspiring female entrepreneurs offer great learning for entrepreneurial education. Our interview teams gain firsthand knowledge about the entrepreneurial journey and have access to hands-on support and advice from a wide variety of experienced and inspiring role models.



*Dr. Sue Rossano-Rivero*



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# My entrepreneurial journey....

# Yoni

After realizing that normal tampons and pads don't list any of their ingredients on pack my co-founder Wendelien and I started Yoni. We believe everyone should know what their period products are made from. We wanted to break the taboo, start talking about periods and offer biological cotton products to make the female hygiene market transparent and sustainable.

### The role models that inspire me:

Many of my friends like Geraldine Moodley as well as lead marketer and mother Bozama Saint John and of course Michelle Obama.

### My targets are

1. To ensure transparent, organic cotton and more sustainable period products are made available on every shelf next to normal period products.
2. To break the taboo around menstruation and share information about periods so that anyone with a menstrual cycle can be more proactive when it comes to their health.
3. To find a healthy life-work balance and to start to focus on other things outside of Yoni, like my yoga practice or helping other entrepreneurs start their businesses.

### Which networks are you integrated in?

- Impact Hub Amsterdam
- EY Women Entrepreneurship
- The Next Women

### My advice to girls and women who want to realise their dreams:

Take time to discover what you want, what your calling is outside of external and perhaps internalised expectations. Seek advice from a therapist or coach to overcome your own personal challenges, which you will definitely come up against.

### My Challenges are

- Personally - Finding and continuously adjusting my work/ life balance as my daughter grows, I and Yoni change.
- For Yoni - how to reach new audiences with a message that will be understood in a time when everyone has a short attention span and there is so much competing for people's attention online and offline.

### When I'm not working:

I enjoy creative yoga and meditation. Spending time with my family and going for nature walks.

### This is what characterises me

1. Autonomous
2. Conscious

## Mariah Mansvelt Beck



Business Name  
Yoni <https://www.yoni.care/>



Place  
Netherlands



Year started as entrepreneur  
2014



Number of employees  
10



What is your highest level of education?  
University

My motto is:  
Seek advice!



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# My entrepreneurial journey....

I loved the idea of working for myself and having the flexibility to balance work, family and study. Through my existing network I established myself in the world of training and professional development for entrepreneurs, global organisations and university students and my business has been growing year after year. A focus upon client needs, quality delivery of service and developing strong relationships has been the secret to the success of the business.

### My targets are

1. I want to spread the word about my research to female leaders and entrepreneurs. The research is about entrepreneurial decision making and professional development.
2. My goal is to scale the delivery of my service offering to have more reach.

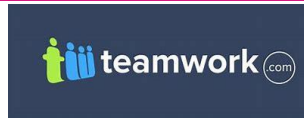
### My Challenges are

1. Managing busy cycles at peak times of the year.
2. Time ! Squeezing jobs into time slots, when it may not allow for enough thinking time, exploration and innovation. It's lovely when there is freedom and unlimited time to do this.

### This is what characterises me

1. Enthusiastic & Curious
2. Engaging
3. Love Learning

### The brands that inspire me



### The role models that inspire me:

Ramona Nicholas - Cara Group of Pharmacies  
 Iseult Ward and Aoibheann O'Brien - Food Cloud  
 Collette Twomey - Clonakilty Black Pudding  
 Vanessa Creaven - Spotlight Oral Healthcare

### Which networks are you integrated in?

MBA Association of Ireland  
 LinkedIn

### My advice to girls and women who want to realise their dreams:

1. The possibilities are end-less therefore let's not be self-limiting with ourselves.
2. Get started and take action with what you have ( means-orientation) It's a resourceful and innovative way to be. Let's not have an expectation of an ideal starting situation stop you from getting started
3. See everything you do as a test or experiment - it takes the pressure off !

### When I'm not working:

I enjoy having fun with friends and spending time with family, reading, movies, venturing in the great outdoors and travelling

## Maria Coakley



Business Name  
 Coakley Project Services



Place  
 Ireland



Year started as entrepreneur  
 2014



Number of employees  
 1



What is your highest level of education?  
 Doctorate

### My motto is:

Work Hard, NO judgement, experiment and be curious.  
 Give things a try, what's the worst that could happen?



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# My entrepreneurial journey....

## Sanja Drakulić



Business Name  
Duart

[Duart](#)



Place  
Zagreb, Croatia



Year started as entrepreneur  
2013



Number of employees  
1



What is your highest level of education?  
Masters

From an actress to a woman building an IT startup in the film industry, to being a successful casting director. I'm still working and learning to improve. I believe in my entrepreneurial idea, now my company, and want to find a way to bring it to the highest level. Transforming and growing but never changing from the core of who I am.

### My targets are

1. I want to build a solid company that is managed by a CEO and I'm developing new ideas.
2. I show great ability, but I have my insecurities as well.
3. My goal is to build a great global company where people love to work, and which fulfills their needs and customer needs.

### My Challenges are

- Despite living in a small country and community, dream big.
- Being patient.
- Planning and giving assignments to employees.
- Identifying myself as an entrepreneur on a global level.

### This is what characterises me

1. Persistent
2. Hard working
3. Capable

### The brands that inspire me

## BORIS RUZIC

### My motto is:

You never know who is in front of you. Be kind to everyone, share your ideas and be open to things you didn't think of.

### The role models that inspire me:

Ashton Kutcher    Ognjenka Antunac  
Chiara Ferragni    Reese Witherspoon

### Which networks are you integrated in?

LinkedIn  
Instagram  
Industry platforms including Duart

### My advice to girls and women who want to realise their dreams:

1. Be brave, find the money and start.
2. Think about all the advice and things people say during your journey, but make your own choices.
3. Feel free to show weakness, often that can bring you solutions
4. Ask for help.

### When I'm not working:

I have fun with friends, fitness, yoga.  
I'm interested in social media (Insta, Clubhouse, LinkedIn) and travelling.



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# My entrepreneurial journey....



## Cleidi Hearn



Business Name  
Sunny Numbers

[Sunny Numbers | Learn Maths and Statistics](#)



Place  
Cork, Ireland



Year started as entrepreneur  
2021



Number of employees  
2



What is your highest level of education?  
Applied Psychology graduate

Being an entrepreneur is my way of making a positive impact on society. I want to help learners worldwide to acquire numeracy skills that they need to achieve their goals.

### My targets are

1. I want to continue developing innovative e-learning solutions to improve the level of numeracy skills globally.
2. My goal is to make Sunny Numbers the number one choice for upskilling in numeracy skills.

### My Challenges are

The ever-present challenge of closing the gender gap in tech and maths. Securing funding as a female entrepreneur.

### This is what characterises me

1. Resourceful
2. Resilient
3. Disciplined

### The brands that inspire me



### The role models that inspire me:

1. Daniele Henkel
2. Oprah Winfrey

### Which networks are you integrated in?

Scale Ireland  
Cork Chamber of Commerce  
Psychological Society of Ireland

### My advice to girls and women who want to realise their dreams:

1. Do not let yourself or others tell you that you can't accomplish something.
2. Only work to solve a problem that you truly care about.
3. It is OK to have a fear of failure. Do it anyway.

### When I'm not working:

I enjoy quality time with my husband. I spend time in nature to recharge and relax. I love travelling and connecting with people.

My motto is:  
Know your numbers



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# My entrepreneurial journey....



## Nora Irwin



Business Name  
BEE Arona Ltd



Place  
Cork, Ireland



Year started as entrepreneur  
2018



Number of employees  
5



What is your highest level of education?  
Diploma

My entrepreneurial journey started from a very young age. I grew up with a love of fragrance and of nature. I grew up in the Irish countryside surrounded by wildflowers and my father kept bees as a hobby. I studied fragrance in the UK and while travelling over and back to London I quickly realised that travelling with liquid was not ideal. I set about making a solid fragrance and beeswax seemed to be the natural way forward for me.

### My targets are

1. I have global ambition.
2. To educate women in 'waterless' cosmetics.

### My Challenges are

Too few women investors.  
More Government supports for female led businesses.

### This is what characterises me

1. Ambitious
2. Positive
3. Curious

### Brands that inspire me



### The role models that inspire me:

Michelle Obama

### Which networks are you integrated in?

- ACORNS – supports early-stage female entrepreneurs living in rural Ireland
- All-Ireland Pollinator Plan

### My advice to girls and women who want to realise their dreams:

Experiment, learn, make mistakes. It will never be perfect just launch.

### When I'm not working:

I enjoy travelling and swimming.

“  
My motto is:  
There are no barriers only the ones  
we create for ourselves.”



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# My entrepreneurial journey....



## Julia Kirsch



Business Name

Generation f [www.generation-f.com](http://www.generation-f.com)



Place  
Germany



Year started as entrepreneur  
2020



Number of employees  
3



What is your highest level of education?  
Masters

My enthusiasm for entrepreneurship was sparked during an internship in the vibrant innovation ecosystem of Tel Aviv. Ever since, I was enthusiastic about finding new ways to empower people through innovation. Becoming an entrepreneur, was simply the next step I had to take in order to achieve this goal.

### My targets are

1. To empower individuals by creating unique digital educational and growth opportunities.
2. To show that diverse backgrounds are key for innovation and progress.
3. My goal is to contribute to a diverse, equal and sustainable economy.

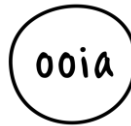
### My Challenges are

- Building and scaling a bootstrapped impact startup.
- Focusing on one step at a time.
- Proving that diversity and equality are essential to a successful economy, not a charity.

### This is what characterises me

1. Passion
2. Curiosity
3. Enthusiasm

### The brands that inspire me



gitti



### The role models that inspire me:

Verena Pausder  
Glennon Doyle

Linda Zervakis  
Mai Thi Nguyen-Kim

### Which networks are you involved in?

REACH Euregio  
Wayra Germany Innovators Room

### My advice to girls and women who want to realise their dreams:

1. Dare to jump into the cold water! It won't get warmer if you wait longer.
2. Lift each other up! Build communities, allies and friendships to support each other, cheer each other on and share your successes. You don't have to do it all by yourself!
3. Stay true to yourself! No matter how big, scary or unique an opportunity may look- listen to your gut and decide for yourself which challenges you want to tackle.

### When I'm not working:

Hiking  
Running & Yoga  
Going out with friends

My motto is:  
Start before you're ready!



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# My entrepreneurial journey....



## Alejandra Perez Kohler



Business Name  
BPS-worldlink UG [About the Organization](#) | [BPS](#)



Place  
North Rhine Westphalia, Germany



Year started as entrepreneur  
2018



Number of employees  
2



What is your highest level of education?  
Bachelor degree in Marketing

I have always been an entrepreneur. When I was 7 years old, I told my Dad I wanted to sell jewellery to friends in school. He took me downtown to Mexico City to buy from wholesalers. My parents always supported me and they, themselves were entrepreneurs. I started as an employee, but I always wanted to be an entrepreneur like my entrepreneur friends who motivated me to become one.

I started as an entrepreneur while I was looking for Stevia (a natural sweetener derived from Stevia leaves) in Germany. Through searching for healthy sugar substitutes, I knew that in Mexico we have great natural alternatives to sugar from agave. That motivated me to bring those products to Germany and Europe and support Mexican producers to enter bigger international markets. I co-founded BPS with my German business partner. I am incredibly proud that BPS gained the trust of the biggest producer of agave syrup in Mexico to represent them to sell their products in Germany and Europe .

### My targets are

1. I want to inspire my kids to be independent and work hard, but more importantly to have the courage to follow their dreams.
2. I want to bring more Mexican enterprises to Germany and Europe. I want Mexico to be recognised for its wonderful people products and companies.

### My Challenges are

1. To represent more Mexican enterprises in Germany and Europe
2. Growing the team at BPS
3. Bringing together a multicultural team that can expand BPS worldwide.

### This is what characterises me

1. Inner restlessness
2. Enthusiasm
3. Creativity

My motto is:  
“Nothing is impossible,  
when you really want something”

### Brands that inspire me

**SPANX**  
BY SARA BLAKELY®

### The role models that inspire me:

Sara Blakely, founder of Spanx

### Which networks are you integrated in?

- Netzwerk im Kreis Warendorf, Germany
- Different networks of Mexican Entrepreneurs in Mexico

### My advice to girls and women who want to realise their dreams:

1. If you have a dream, you should live it and do anything to reach it. But you need to have a plan!
2. Do not wait for somebodies' approval. Be who you want to be!
3. Trust yourself and support each other.

### When I'm not working:

I enjoy reading, dancing and walking my dog



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# My entrepreneurial journey....

THENEXTCLOSET

## The role models that inspire me:

## Which networks are you integrated in?

- The Next Women
- Scale up Nation
- Techleap
- Female founders Whatsapp group

## My advice to girls and women who want to realise their dreams:

Find like minded people and passionate entrepreneurs, it is great to share experiences and learn from others.

## When I'm not working:

The first time Thalita and I worked together, we set up a car rally for professionals that make the world a better place from the job they are in. With an unbelievable amount of support, we were able to transform the foundation into a business. From there, we were involved in multiple sustainable business before we eventually put our experience together into The Next Closet.

The Next Closet is an online platform for secondhand clothing with a focus on delivering the EU market.

## My targets are

1. To embrace diversity in the workplace.
2. To show the importance of sharing knowledge
3. To build strong partnerships within the fashion industry

## My Challenges are

Balancing growth with a sustainable business model

## This is what characterises me

1. Enthusiasm
2. Learn by doing

## The brands that inspire me



## Lieke Pijpers



Business Name  
The Next Closet <https://thenextcloset.com/>



Place  
Netherlands



Year started as entrepreneur  
2013



Number of employees  
20



What is your highest level of education?  
University

My motto is:  
Just do it!



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# My entrepreneurial journey...

# No Isolation

AV1 is the world's first telepresence robot that helps long-term ill children and young adults stay connected with their peers. Technology allows children keep up with education in the classroom, as well as stay in contact with family and friends, without being physically present.

### My targets are

1. People suffering from loneliness.
2. We have started with the kids who are suffering from a long-term illness.
3. We focus on the elderly through a simple, one-button computer that bridges the communication gap between different generations.

### This is what characterises me

I am passionate about warm technology, usability, design-for-good, and communication.

### The role models that inspire me:

Putting an end to loneliness: check out Karen Dolva's [TedxTalk](#) with more than 2 million views

### Which hubs/networks are you involved in?

- Atea
- Vodafone
- Barncancerfonden
- Special Effect
- Chartwell Cancer Trust
- ACS International Schools

### My advice to girls and women who want to realise their dreams:

Go for your passion and realise your dreams!

### When I'm not working:

I like travelling and meeting other culturally diverse people fighting to break their social isolation.

## Karen Dolva



Business Name  
NO ISOLATION - <https://www.noisolation.com/>



Place  
OSLO – LONDON – MÜNCHEN - ROTTERDAM



Year started as entrepreneur  
2015



Number of employees  
64 employees across 6 locations



What is your highest level of education?  
Masters Degree in Information Science and Interactive Design from the University of Oslo

**My motto:**  
“We reduce loneliness and social isolation through warm technology!”



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# Our entrepreneurial journey...

Ending food waste across the value chain, through innovative technology that saves our customers valuable resources.

## Our Target are

Educating people to understand that problems can become opportunities when the right people come together!

## This is what characterises me

I have worked since I was 12. One of my jobs was in a supermarket where I could see all the food wasted. Ever since then, I was passionate about finding a solution to food waste!

## When I'm not working:

From idea to global success it took a bit more than a year! Since the start, I'm passionately focused on the business!

## Role models that inspire me:

- Amanda Wood, Stockholm Resilience Center
- Sara Seing Jervfors, Diet for a Green Planet, Södertälje Municipality
- Analisa Winther, Nordic Foodtech Ecosystem builder

## Which networks are you involved in?

- Europe Waste Management Companies
- City of Oslo Female Founded companies
- Nordic Countries Software Female Founded Companies
- Food processing Female Founded Companies

## My advice to girls and women who want to realise their dreams:

1. Make sure you are solving a need that people are willing to pay for!
2. Sell before you build! Show hard sales and throw away your elevator pitch!
3. Building a business model based on sales is scalable and will increase shareholders' values quickly and reduce the need for capital!

## Charlotte Aschim



Business Name  
**TotalCtrl** - <https://totalctrl.com>



Place  
Oslo, Norway



Year started as entrepreneur  
2017



Number of employees  
3



What is your highest level of education?  
Masters at Norwegian University of Life Sciences

## My motto:

In five years, I want our technology to be used worldwide so that in 20 years our children get to grow up in a world without any food waste!



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# Our entrepreneurial journey....



## Lea Kipper & Barbara von Groote-Gotzes



Business Name  
muenster.fair <https://muensterfair.de/>



Place  
Münster, Germany



Year started as entrepreneur  
2019



Number of employees  
2



What is your highest level of education?  
Master Degree in philosophy (both)

We are good friends and got to know each other through studying philosophy together and working at the university in Münster.

We, like many others, are aware that something urgently needs to change if we want to preserve this earth and all that it means to us for the future. We can all contribute to this with a more sustainable lifestyle.

### Our targets are

We want to make sustainability and sustainable living simple. Sustainability does not necessarily mean sacrifice.

### Our Challenges are

Our challenges are definitely the issue of attention and monetisation.

### This is what characterises us

Lea: I am an optimist, very organized, and love working with others.  
Barbara: I am very persistent, committed to my values, and disciplined. I love to push things forward and make visions come true.

### The brands that inspire us



### The role models that inspire us:

Kristina Lunz

### Which networks are you involved in?

REACH to EMPOWER

### Our advice to girls and women who want to realise their dreams:

Believe in yourself and your idea and dare to go out with your vision and talk about it. You can't lose if you are brave.

NETWORK with others, share, be authentic and don't be intimidated by others.

### When we're not working:

We love to spend time with family and friends, take part in sports, or travel.

Our motto is:  
Every little step counts!



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# My entrepreneurial journey....



## Silvija Seres



Business Name

LØRN.TECH – <https://www.lorn.tech/>  
TechnoRocks - <https://technorocks.com/>



Place

Oslo, Norway



Year started as entrepreneur

2011



Number of employees

20+



What is your highest level of education?

MSC Computer Science (Oslo), MBA (INSEAD),  
PhD Mathematical Sciences (Oxford University)

I am an academic techie with a past in corporate leadership, a present in entrepreneurial investment, and a future in large-scale digital transformation processes in the public and private sectors.

### My targets are

We as humans – how should we relate to technology.

### My Challenges are

We should not worry too much about the growth of artificial intelligence.  
We should instead worry about the decline of natural creativity.

### This is what characterises me

Passionate about whatever I do.  
My love story to IT: <https://youtu.be/KTMMdi6RcAM>

### The brands that inspire me

I have board experience from 50+ leading global and Norwegian companies, scientific boards and I have investments in 30+ tech companies.

### The role models that inspire me:

Life has many dimensions and each and every one of us needs to make their own choice and shape their own life.

### Which networks are you involved in?

IT, finance, media, energy and digital transformation related networks

### My advice to girls and women who want to realise their dreams:

The two superpower tools for us as humans both girls and boys, women and men are  
(I) the power to learn and  
(II) the power to choose when we have impossible choices.  
Use both of them!  
Think life phases & long term!

### When I'm not working:

- Family
- Scuba diving
- Rowing
- Swimming

“  
My motto:  
Our rebelliousness is  
our human superpower!”



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# My entrepreneurial journey....



## ANDRIJANA MRKELA



Business Name  
NorthWest Agency (Pixel industry d.o.o.)



Place  
Varaždin, Croatia



Year started as entrepreneur  
2014.



Number of employees  
7



What is your highest level of education?  
Master of science

I first started as a freelancer, with my husband. We worked as a team on an international marketplace selling digital products. After a year, we decided to expand, register a company and start hiring. With time we switched our business model completely and now work on custom web solutions for clients across the world.

### My targets are

I want to further expand my skills and become one of the role models in my area of expertise.

### My Challenges are

Keeping track of all the things I'd like to learn in a fast changing business environment. Work and life balance.

### This is what characterises me

Enthusiastic, positive, creative

### The brands that inspire me



### The role models that inspire me:

Jon Bon Jovi, Don Norman, Walt Disney

### Which networks are you involved in?

Toptal

### My advice to girls and women who want to realise their dreams:

Always believe in yourself; Never give up;  
Surround yourself with positive people.

### When I'm not working:

DIY crafts  
Travelling

My motto is:  
Learn something new each day



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## Marta Blažević



Business Name  
Astra Divina



Place  
Gerovo, Croatia



Year started as entrepreneur  
2020



Number of employees  
1



What is your highest level of education?  
Masters in biology and ecology

# My entrepreneurial journey....



### The role models that inspire me:

- Claire Wineland
- Louise Hay
- Rich Roll

### Which networks are you involved in?

International Women's Business Network; Interpret Europe; Center for Agriculture and Rural Development.

### My advice to girls and women who want to realise their dreams:

Believe in yourself no matter what other people tell you. Stay true to yourself. Be respectful of others' opinions but also, respect yourself. Be authentic. People love to connect with someone they can confide in.

### When I'm not working:

- Walking in nature with my dogs
- Playing the cello
- Yoga
- Gardening
- Spending time with friends

It has been a great adventure! The decision to move from the city into a small village, to prove that it is possible to create an offer that was not available until I offered it, and the most important thing is that this unique idea became successful despite the pandemic.

### My targets are

To reconnect people with nature in a conscious and sustainable way, to show that it is possible to achieve your dreams and live in harmony with nature.

### My Challenges are

To set boundaries, finding time to rest, finding business partners with the same enthusiasm

### This is what characterises me

Enthusiasm, optimism, boldness

### The brands that inspire me

Wilderness

My motto is:  
Everything is possible



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# My entrepreneurial journey....



## Maynara Furquim



Business Name

May's Bolos Doces Tortas  
[mays.bdt](https://mays.bdt) | [Instagram](#) | [Linktree](#)



Place

Bragança Paulista, Brazil



Year started as an entrepreneur  
2017



Number of employees  
3



What is your highest level of education?  
Master Degree

... has been quite a journey. I started young (21 years old) while I was finishing my bachelor studies. It was an "informal adventure" with my cousin until officially it became a family business in 2019. But I hadn't seen myself as an entrepreneur until 2022 when I became involved with the entrepreneurship world. During these years I doubted myself, but perseverance was key to keeping going and succeeding.

### My targets are

Support and grow my family business in the best way (even though I live in a different country now) and make the world a better (and sweeter) place each day.

### My Challenges are

To make the world a better (and sweeter) place each day

### This is what characterises me

Determined, very organised, resilient and curious

### The brands that inspire me



### The role models that inspire me:

Regina Furquim (My mom)      Taylor Swift  
Nathalia Arcuri                      Flávia Maskavo

### Which networks are you integrated in?

WeRin

### My advice to girls and women who want to realise their dreams:

Don't be afraid; if you never try, you will never know. You are not alone in this journey, seek those who can help and support you. And if you feel like a failure, let yourself feel like that for a moment and then get up and find a way to make it.

"Have the courage to replace fears with dreams; don't be managers of fears, but entrepreneurs of dreams."  
- Pope Francis

### When I'm not working:

I am baking, watching series/movies, listening to music, swimming or doing pilates and hanging out with family and friends.

My motto is:  
"One day at a time"



[www.werinproject.eu](http://www.werinproject.eu)